



Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

VOLUME 1

GURUPRIYA ANANDA GIRI
(Sri Gurupriya Devi)

Translated by Tara Kini

*With an introduction by Mahamahopadhyaya
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To the One who is beyond the grasp of the human intellect and who, though residing in Her own abode of complete bliss, for the sake of conveying the message of the effulgent and ever peaceful abode, through Her compassion has appeared in a human form in this world, and who has shown by Her own conduct how one can enter the *Mahābhāva* through the action, devotion and knowledge pervaded *khanda-bhāva*, and how, after the ceaseless dancing of the waves of *bhāva*, eternal rest is attainable in the end in the ever peaceful consciousness of one's own true nature which is beyond *bhāva*, to that Mother of all who seek refuge, who is most worthy of worship, Sri Sri 108 Mukteshwari Mata Anandamayi's lotus feet which promote the welfare of the universe, I offer with profound veneration this small floral garland of Her own holy life story, in the form of an oblation of devotion and love, which is like performing Ganga puja with Ganga water.

The humble authoress.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	Page No.
INTRODUCTION	...
GURUPRIYA ANANDA GIRI	xii
TRANSLATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	xiv
A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF SRI SRI MA'S EARLIER LIFE (1896 to 1924)	xxxvi
	xxx
	1-25

CHAPTER ONE

First Darshan	...
Ma's <i>bhoga</i> in our house, Winter 1926	29
Solar eclipse festival, 14th January 1926	35
Ma's <i>bhāva</i> during kirtan	38
An incident	39
Injunction to have kirtan regularly at Shahbagh	44
Offering to Ma	47
Feeding beggars — serving God in the guise of the poor (<i>Daridra Nārāyaṇa</i>), February 1926	48
The story of the orphan	49
Ma's own description of her earlier life	54
Taking on other people's illnesses	57
The method of taking and breaking the vow of silence (<i>mauna</i>)	58
The story of Siddheshwari	59
The earlier history of Siddheshwari	60
Impediment in <i>bhoga</i>	62
	67

Offering to Ma on every *Amāvasyā* and *Pūrnimā*
(Newmoon & Fullmoon)

...	68
-----	----

If the object to be offered is coveted it can
never be offered

...	69
-----	----

CHAPTER TWO

Wonderful state during kirtan and food offering
on *Amāvasyā* day

The consequences of offering flowers at Ma's feet	...	71
---	-----	----

Cessation of eating with her own hands — the
task of feeding falls to me

...	76
-----	----

History of the Kali Puja during
Deepavali, November 1925

...	77
-----	----

Ma's condition in *bhāva*

...	77
-----	----

Vision of Arab *sākīs* in Bajitpur

...	80
-----	----

Description of earlier spiritual states

...	80
-----	----

Order to build a room in Siddheshwari

given during <i>sāmādhi</i> , February-March 1926	...	82
---	-----	----

Performance of Sri Vasanti Puja in the above
mentioned room, April, 1926

...	84
-----	----

Sitanath Kushari's feeling of Ma's Divinity

...	94
-----	----

Maroni is granted shelter

...	95
-----	----

About Jyotish Dada and Niranjan Babu

...	95
-----	----

Bholanath's indisposition

...	96
-----	----

About Ma's birth and childhood

...	97
-----	----

Piśimā's offering of rice pudding (*khīr*)

...	98
-----	----

Cessation of doing *pranāma*

...	99
-----	----

	Page No.
Various regulations in diet	100
Regulations in speech	104

CHAPTER THREE

Ma's trip to Vaidyanath Dhām, Vaishakh (May) 1926	106
In Calcutta during our return	110
Return to Dacca	111
The incident at Siddheshwari	111
Removal of order banning entry of people into the garden	115
One day's incident — attempt to touch everyone's feet during kirtan	116
Removing illnesses	116
(a) About Atul Datta's son	117
(b) The story of Gurubandhu's son	119
(c) The story of a boy suffering from <i>kali-azar</i>	120
(d) The story of the tuberculosis patient	121
About Yogesh Rai	122
The gathering of devotees	125
Various kinds of questions and their discussion	125
Durga Puja in 1926	127

CHAPTER FOUR

The history of Kali Puja 1926	129
The sacrificial fire of the Kali Puja	133
Preservation of the sacrificial fire	134
Preservation of the image	134
Kamalakanta	135

	Page No.
Several incidents	135
(a) Ma's cough and its cure	135
(b) Nandu's illness and recovery	135
(c) Cure of a paralyzed girl	136
(d) "All bodies are mine"	137
Ma strokes my body during my feverish condition	139
The superimposition of light and of Bhaji's picture on Ma's photograph, October 1926	141
Kali Puja done by Ashu's mother and Virendra Dada	141
The shifting of the image of Kali	143
About incense during kirtan	143
Change in Ma's condition	144
Visit to Dacca and Paruldiya	145
Visit to Rajadiya and other places	146
Visit to Paruldiya once more, Rai Bahadur's mother's <i>friddha</i> , December 1926	146
Nirmal Babu has darshan of Ma in the form of Goddess Saraswati	150
About Kulada Bandopadhyaya	151
Relighting of the sacrificial fire and arrangements for Kali Puja	152

CHAPTER FIVE

Pilgrimage to Hardwar to see the Maha Kumbha, February-March 1927	154
Changes in Ma's moods	155
At Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyaya's house at Varanasi	156

	Page No.
Kumbha bath at Hardwar and return to Dacca via Mathura and Vrindaban	... 158
The efficacy of one-pointedness	... 161
Ecstatic states of Baul Babu's and Chintaharan Babu's wives during kirtan	... 162
Ma forgoes drinking water for a long period — the wonderful prize for offering a drink of water to Ma	162
A few earlier incidents — Occasional revelations of supernatural power	... 163
Ma's advice : the need for restraint and secrecy in matters of supernormal conditions	... 167
Ma's strange behaviour	... 167
Ma's departure from Dacca	... 169
First attempt to build an Ashram for Ma	... 169
Kunja Babu's fifth son escapes snake bite by Ma's grace	... 170
Jyotish Dada's stay at Chunar and Giridi	... 172
Ma's return to Dacca	... 172
Ma's visit to her father's house at Vidyakut	... 173
Visit to Kheora — darshan of Ma's birthplace	... 173
Departure for Dacca from Vidyakut	... 175
Darshan of a great soul in the form of a snake in the path of the boat	... 177
Ma sees a snake in Niranjan Babu's house	... 178
Ma's visit to Calcutta for the weddings of Pyaribhanu's son and daughter	... 179
Pyaribhanu's visit to Dacca	... 180
Pilgrimage to Kamakhya, 1927	... 188

	Page No.
Ma at Ferozepur	... 184
Ma at Vaisari	... 185
Sohagadal village	... 186
Return to Dacca via Salkiya and Rajshahi	... 186
CHAPTER SIX	
New regulations in diet	... 188
Revelation of a divine form to Pramatha Nath and his peon	... 189
Balananda Swami's opinion : "Ma is an eternal siddha"	... 190
Ma's secret lila in Siddheshwari	... 190
Family Durga Puja by Father at the Tikatuli house, in October 1927	... 191
Construction of a big room at Siddheshwari	... 194
Ma leaves Dacca — trip to Giridi, Chunar and Vindhyaachal	... 195
Necessity of being careful in speech, 1927	... 196
The shifting of the image of Kali in 1927	... 197
Ma's entry into the rented house at Tikatuli, May 1928	... 197
The celebration of Ma's birthday at Siddheshwari for the first time, Vaishakh, 1928	... 198
Ma's recitation of the Koran and performance of namaz	... 200
Ma's visit to Tangail	... 202
The shifting of the image of Kali to Uttama Kutir and Ma's arrival there, June 1928	... 203

	Page No.
Trip to Barishal and Vikrampur	204
Visit to Dinesh Babu's house at Tangail	207
Visit to Varanasi at the invitation of Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyaya	210
Ma's prophecy to Usha Didi of Bajitpur	213
Ma's sojourn at Varanasi	214
Ma's arrival at Dacca	217
Ma's visit to Kumilla	217
Ma's stay at Calcutta — Ma's influence on Rai Bahadur's life	217
Return to Dacca — change in Ma's bodily condition	218
Ma's foresight about leaving Dacca	219
The effect of fire on Ma's body — the absence of heat in fire	219
Didima's illness	220
The exhaustion of a horse's karma by pulling the carriage	221
Ma leaves Uttama Kutir	221
Bholanath leaves Dacca suddenly	223
GLOSSARY	225
INDEX OF NAMES	241

DEDICATION

It was about twelve or thirteen years ago, when I first had Ma's darshan and was enthralled ; at that time I once had the desire to write about these happenings, so that I could read them and derive bliss. Driven by this desire, I did write something, though most of my time was spent with Ma and not much leisure was available for writing. And when I sat down to write, I felt that it was not possible to communicate these incidents and divine līlā through language ; yet I wrote a bit. After a few days my writing stopped due to unavoidable circumstances. When my father and I came away permanently from our home on Ma's instructions, all the note books remained behind. Later, when Ma left us at Siddheshwari my heart started pining for Ma. One day, I thought that if I read the stories of Ma's past, I would find relief, but though the whole house was searched, the note-books could not be found. I felt very sad. Some years later, the respected late Jyotish Rai (Bhaiji) requested everyone to write incidents from Ma's life (in whichever form each one saw and experienced them). I then decided not to write anything. But I do not know why and by whose inspiration, the desire to write awoke little by little. Jyotish Dada also said, "It is appropriate for you to write, because you have spent much time with Ma and witnessed many happenings, big and small." By his encouragement, the eagerness to write increased. At that time, the facility for this was also created by Ma — she left me almost alone at the Vindhyaachal Ashram. In that solitary

place, during my spare time, I started writing again. By Ma's grace, earlier incidents began to awaken in my memory more and more. Just as a definite time was allotted for the repetition of God's name (*japa*), similarly, I set apart a definite time for writing about Ma's life. I considered it a part of my spiritual practice (*sūdhanā*). Though for a person like myself to write about Ma's life was like a dwarf's desire to touch the moon, still I wrote and felt it was good to do so. I knew that in learned circles this book would be considered worthless because I do not at all possess the necessary knowledge and intelligence needed to produce a book. But I thought that those who came in contact with Ma would read these anecdotes and experience bliss, and that the shortcomings in the language of the writer would not come in the way. Because I have experienced that when many of us get together and start talking about Ma, then taking one incident only of the past and thinking it over again and again, we have spent so many nights without anyone feeling the slightest boredom or fatigue. It was as if every detail about Ma were perpetually novel. And it is also very true that it is totally beyond our power to understand Ma's nature. I have only written that which I have understood, seen, or heard. I have tried very hard that there should not be a word of exaggeration. Yet, those of my kind brothers and sisters, who have come in contact with Ma, will notice any number of examples of my incompetency. I ask forgiveness for that. To those who have not seen Ma and who are coming to know her only through this book, I make an entreaty that if they misunderstand Ma's nature or character at any place, the failing is

mine. There is no imperfection or shortcoming in Ma's conduct anywhere. Those who have met Ma will understand the truth of this statement. It is a pity that several incidents of Ma's life are kept concealed because those special sayings which Ma has uttered privately to certain people, or some special activities of Ma which have been revealed only to certain individuals, remain secret, and may probably always remain secret, because no one may be prepared to reveal them.

I shall say one thing before ending my discourse. I wrote all this haphazardly and handed it over to revered Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Sri Gopinath Kaviraj, D.Litt. (Ex-Principal, Government Sanskrit College, Benares) who worked hard to put this book into shape and who has also written an introduction to it. For this I am eternally grateful to him. Ma's old devotee Bāla Brāhmachari Sri Nepalchandra Chakravartiji* helped Kavirajji in this work to the best of his ability. He has toiled over it day and night. He delights in doing Ma's work. I express my gratitude to him.

Jyotish Dada is not in this world anymore. It was only by his encouragement that I got involved in this work. How happy he would have been, had he been here to see Ma's life story being published. If anyone experiences the slightest bliss by reading this life story of Ma, I shall consider my effort to be successful.

Varanasi, May, 1942

—Gurupriya Devi

* Late Shri Nepal Chakravarti known as Swami Nārāyanānanda Tīrtha after taking *sannyāsa*.

INTRODUCTION

(1)

The authoress of this book and some of my respected friends who are devotees of Ma have requested me to write an introduction to this book. They desire that I present before the readers a brief account of my individual understanding and opinion of Ma. It seems they believe that this is an opportunity to place before the world Ma's true identity to at least a small degree in the course of these thoughts on the subject of Ma's nature.

The truth of the matter however is, that though I am writing my discourse in the form of a concise introduction in order to comply with their request, their desire will not be fulfilled. It is totally impossible for an incompetent person like myself with my kind of nature to achieve this, and I feel that even with a different nature and with more capability this job is not easy. My individual opinion and belief in connection with Ma is something pertaining to my heart. People are not bound to accept it without pondering over it. That which cannot be argued with anyone, which one does not feel inclined to argue about, which is worthy of being nurtured secretly in the innermost hidden recesses of the heart — the heart just does not want to scoop that out from within and make it the subject of open discussion. So is it not unforgivable presumptuousness for a person of my limited capacity to even attempt to place before others Ma's true identity ?

The authoress has delineated Ma's outward behaviour as skillfully as possible in this book, and has also noted the delightful teachings uttered by Ma Herself. The authors of "Matri Darshan" and "Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Prasanga", have also made similar attempts in a beautiful way. A description of Ma's divine lila as performed by Her body will surely be obtained by reading all these books. Those who have had the good fortune of actually meeting Ma and hearing her speak, will derive a clearer picture.

But these external descriptions of Ma are of various kinds. Each one views and will view Ma with an attitude that varies according to his or her *samskaras* (tendencies and impressions), because it is the external acquaintance. It is extremely difficult to obtain an insight into Ma's true identity. Even if someone were fortunate enough to get a glimpse of it, it is only wishful thinking that he may be able to reveal it to others. Actually, being children it seems to be dire foolishness to try to assess our Mother's identity. "Who is Ma?", and "What is Ma's real nature?" — such profound matters can never be discussed by children with meagre understanding. When the child was unborn, Ma existed. When the child ceases to live, Ma will still exist. Ma is eternal — what power does the child have by which he can succeed in understanding this Ma's real nature? How will a child have the capacity to understand One whose strength alone gives him the strength to take birth, Whose existence alone can cause his existence and without Whose support he cannot live even for a moment? A man who has become very strong by spiritual practices may yet perform evil actions, but at the base of the spiritual

practice is an iota of Her power. Without at least a trace of the Grace of *Mahāsakti*, man is powerless like an inanimate object — why man, even Lord *Siva* lies motionless like a corpse without *Sakti*. Who can recognise or understand that *Sakti* who is the very life of all gods and creatures ? The living power in each kind of spiritual practice, whether it be the path of knowledge, devotion or action, is Her Grace ; therefore who possesses such power of his own by which he can understand Her ? If She reveals Her nature Herself, then perhaps some insight may be gained, but even this is not easy for everyone — each one gains only as much as She reveals of Herself and nothing more.

Just as for a blind man the existence of the brilliant, effulgent and ever bright Sun-God is as good as nil, similarly, though Primordial *Sakti* is illumining the universe, She remains unrevealed to the ordinary person. If She does not reveal Her nature Herself no one can recognise it. It is said, that Narada once went to Svetadveepa with the desire of having Lord *Nārāyaṇa*'s darshan. Svetadveepa is an extremely inaccessible place where normally even gods and *rāts* are unable to go. Narada not only went there, he also had darshan of *Nārāyaṇa* smeared with ash. Having by virtue of the power of his penances obtained a darshan of this form which is difficult even for gods, Narada felt happy and proud. Simultaneously a celestial voice proclaimed, "Narada, you are unnecessarily feeling conceited. Having seen this form of mine, clothed by the elements, you think you have had darshan of God's ultimate Nature. But your conclusion is wrong, because this form of mine is illusory. You have not yet had darshan of my real nature."

Without His special grace no one can have darshan of His true nature. A yogi with his yogic powers can gain knowledge of all that is beyond all created worlds, of the future and of all possible things of the present all at once and as vividly as the present, with as much ease as holding gooseberries in one's palm. But knowledge about *Mahāsakti* is not gained even from this. In *samādhi* which is based on intelligence, an understanding of worldly matters is awakened, but *Prakṛti* or *Puruṣa* which are the basis of the universe are not its subjects. So the most magnificent *Sakti* which is beyond *Puruṣa* or *Prakṛti* is even further away from its grasp. The power of knowledge of the learned and the power of devotion of the devotee are not capable of touching Ma's feet. In reality the powers of yoga, knowledge, devotion and all powers are but a reflection of an atom of that most powerful Mother. If these puny reflecting powers are used to understand that base, they are robbed of their very existence and are unable to accomplish any job. Just as the attempt of a lamp to illuminate the sun is ridiculous, so also it is ridiculous for man with his reflecting powers to attempt to understand the nature of *Mahāsakti* Ma.

Normally, the Mother does not reveal Her identity to Her child, nor does the child feel the need of such knowledge ; the Mother keeps fulfilling his needs and makes him forget everything else by giving him whatever he wants. She gives sense pleasures to those who want to enjoy them, She gives liberation to those who desire freedom. She removes the sorrow of the miserable and She gives food to the hungry, water to the thirsty and knowledge to one who desires learning.

She appears to each one in whichever form he worships Her. Each aspirant obtains knowledge of Her nature according to what is due to him depending on his attitude (*bhāva*), but that is not knowledge of Her true identity. Ma's nature is beyond *bhāva*. Mother, who is the personification of *mahā-bhāva* is actually beyond all *bhāvas*, though She is the confluence and the origin of infinite *bhāvas* in infinite ways. Who will be able to grasp the true nature of Ma, which is beyond *Turya*? It is impossible to contemplate the *Mahābhava* when one is governed by a limited *bhāva* (*khanda bhāva*). To contemplate something which is beyond *bhāva* is nothing but a distant dream. And what can a trifling man understand when even the *khanda* (partial) *bhāva* has not awakened in his heart? If one is to understand Ma, one has to dedicate one's self wholly to Her and realise oneness with Her — it is not possible to remain apart from Ma and recognise Her identity. The cessation of the sense of separate I-ness which gives complete self-surrender and achieves union is possible only by Ma's complete grace. On reaching that condition, the child is not separate from Ma and at that moment Ma alone is present in Her *Cit Ananda Svarūpa*: She Herself knows Herself. That Self-knowledge has always been Hers. But what is the use of that for the *jīva*? For the *jīva*, the attempt to understand Ma always remains ridiculous.

When Ma's nature cannot be understood by the power of action, yoga and devotion, then it is needless to mention that it is not possible to understand it by reading Her life and by listening to Her teaching. Outward behaviour can only indicate the *bhāva* that is present within. What can we understand

of the behaviour of One who is not bound by any *bhāva* and yet can use all the *bhāvas* for Her play and in fact does so for Her divine *līlā*? She may and does abide by scriptural injunctions and social norms for the sake of setting an example for those around Her; and again, for educating people or for some other inconceivable reason, She may also break these rules. But how is Her greatness enhanced or lowered by this? She is not bound by the rule of causal action at all — action or sin and merit cannot touch Her. It is senseless to think that Her behaviour is always imitable for ordinary beings. Lord Siva swallowed *halihala* (a deadly poison which emerged when the ocean was churned) and conquered death, but for ordinary men, drinking poison spells sure death. She behaves to suit Her role at each place and occasion, yet Her conduct is incomprehensible at times. Ordinary men tread the path of action because of the desire for immediate and individual gain, the effects of actions performed in previous lives, and the promptings of the discriminating intellect, since their entire lives are based on the sense of I-ness. But for One Who in spite of assuming a human form, is devoid of identification with the body, Whose wealth of knowledge remained unmitigated since birth, Whose heart is untouched by pride or selfish desire, whose action is not animated by individual *samskāras* or ideals — all Her transactions are performed by the inspiration of Her Nature alone. Therefore the greatness of Her life cannot be ascertained by using the measuring rod of an ordinary man's thoughts. Neither the science of ethics, nor the code of laws, nor the science of conduct, nor any other science can explain Her — Her behaviour is beyond the

sacred precepts of the Vedas. One can estimate the nature of a person by his behaviour, but it is impossible even to hope to be able to understand One who has stepped beyond the limits of being, and who, though unattached and without any sense of ego Herself is play-acting, using various moods and emotions. This has already been stated earlier.

Though verbal instruction be very sweet and may do a lot of good to people, it cannot give knowledge about the true nature of the instructor. If a small child tries to judge the scholarship of his teacher from the lesson he has been taught, he will not succeed. Even otherwise a discourse in spoken language is incomplete by nature, and cannot cause the awaking of pure knowledge; it particularly depends on the capacity and competence of the listener. Subtle communication, instead of spoken language is also dependent on the mental capacity of the listener and is received with some amount of distortion; when it is revealed to others there is further distortion. This is but natural. In these circumstances, it is not possible to gain a proper understanding of Ma even through Her teaching or instructions.

It is useless to try to understand Ma through this book, or through other books or even through teaching uttered by Ma Herself. Therefore to obtain a proper knowledge of Ma's identity — to understand Ma — is not possible. Several methods like yoga, sacrifices, penance, tantra and mantra are available, but none of these make Her accessible. Complete understanding is beyond our reach, but how many have even partial understanding? She is not attainable by the aspirant who has desires, nor by the aspirant who is desireless. He who

has desires, wants the objects of his desires. He is greedy for enjoyment and does not wan Ma at all. He is attracted towards Ma's supernatural power and glory. Ma also gives him that and reveals Herself to him in that very aspect. On the other hand, the aspirant who is desireless, who is unattached, desires liberation (is a *mumukṣu*) - though he does not have a longing for sense enjoyment, he still desires liberation (*mokṣa*), and *mokṣa* is one of Ma's powers, like sense enjoyment. Ma grants this kind of aspirant liberation from the bonds of *samsara*. The Mother who is the embodiment of the supreme *Sakti*, and from Whose feet enjoyment and liberation emerge of their own accord, that *Cidānandamayi* Ma is the Mother of both *Śiva* and *jīva*. She is perfect, most excellent, eternal, mysterious, full of delight, She is an incarnation of the deepest Love. How many people really long for Her? And how many understand Her? The glamour of the path of sense enjoyment and the beatitude of the path of liberation, both lie at Her feet. The desire for either of these is an obstruction on the path of obtaining Ma. For those who have not experienced Love, the glamour of enjoyment (of this world, of the next world) and permanent beatitude (*Puruṣa Kaivalya* and *Brahma Kaivalya*) seem to be goals worth attaining. *Mahamāyā*, the Mother of the universe, remains hidden to such people, and She keeps them satisfied by fulfilling their aspirations. Therefore Her nature remains a secret for people who desire enjoyment or beatitude, because why should She reveal Herself to those who do not desire Her at all?

(2)

So, does Ma never reveal Her true identity? This certainly cannot be stated. Though it be most difficult to approach and equally difficult to grasp, yet She does reveal Herself sometimes, because She is overflowing with motherly love. She cannot remain without answering the heartfelt cry of 'Ma, Ma' of a child. Even if there be no penance, no yoga, knowledge or devotion, if one can call out 'Ma, Ma', from a restless heart like that of a simple child that has been separated from its mother, the nectar of love is bound to be secreted in Ma's breasts. She drenches with ambrosial affection the heart of the child begging for motherly love. The child on obtaining Ma, cries out "Ma — Ma", and receives Her fondling affection and feels blessed. What does he lose even if he does not understand Her true nature? For he can recognise Ma as his own loving and bliss permeated Mother. This is sufficient for him and he does not try to understand more than this — because there is no consistency between childlike emotions and this kind of attempt at understanding. If he tries to understand Ma he loses Her and plunges into the hollow of artificiality and is bereft of Ma's darshan. Therefore, though a childlike mentality is not successful in understanding Ma, yet only a childlike nature is helpful in making one experience the motherliness of Ma. This is the truth, for without accepting the role of a child within oneself, one cannot experience the magnanimity of Ma's *bhāva*. The infinite greatness of Ma's power is revealed to some extent in response to such childlike emotions. Therefore, though to understand Ma's true identity is practically impossible, yet when Ma reveals

Herself to some extent to each one because of Her overflowing love for the child, that person believes that much to be the truth. It is fitting to see the play of motherly love and divine sport in Ma's life and teaching rather than attempt to discover Her true identity. It is not right to drag something so full of love into the arena of dry arguments and destroy its sweetness.

But such childlike natures are not easily available everywhere. The ignorance or the lack of discrimination of a child is easy to find, but a child's simplicity and purity are extremely rare. And for Ma's darshan these qualities alone are most necessary.

(3)

I have already mentioned that material and external knowledge will vary from person to person according to the *samskāras* of each individual. It is not necessary to repeat that such knowledge is not true knowledge. Those who are familiar with the history of Ma's physical body, know that at different times different people have viewed Her variedly. It is also not as if many have not changed their views with the progress of time. There is diversity everywhere in creation and here also there is diversity — this cannot be denied.

When people first saw and heard about the extraordinariness in Ma's life at Bajitpur, some thoughtless and ordinary people ignorantly concluded that Ma was under the spell of a ghost, spirit or wicked god. Suitable measures were also taken to exorcise the spirits. But everybody realised soon enough that this spirit could not be driven out by exorcists. At that time some people also believed that Ma was suffering from hysteria, flatulence or some disease of that kind. Whatever changes

occurred in Ma's body as Her *bhāva* blossomed, were interpreted as symptoms of ill-health. But these people also rapidly realised their mistake. Ordinary people do not understand what *bhāva* is, nor do they know the bodily changes brought about by the manifestation of *bhāva*. Therefore their misinterpretation of outward symptoms is not baseless. Such public opinions were propagated for a while also in the case of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and other great beings during some part of their lives.

However, these two opinions are no longer prevalent. Yet other opinions exist and it seems as if they will always remain.* Some of these opinions are extremely strange. Yet, though they be strange they cannot be waved aside, for whoever believes in a particular doctrine, his faith and reasoning conform to that doctrine. Even if the thoughts do not suit another doctrine they cannot be called baseless and be expelled.

*Those who have a knowledge of the Hindu, Buddhist and Christian religions will know these opinions quite well. Sri Krishna was called an Incarnation by some, and others described Him as God Himself. Some believed Him to be an incarnation of Nārāyaṇa Rsi, while some understood Him to be an ordinary man. 'Avāñanti mām mādū māngim janumāśrīm'. "The fool disregards me, when clad in human semblance" (Gītā) — we understand from this statement of God, that He was even disrespected by some. In traditional Buddhist literature also we find such varied opinions about Buddha. The basic differences between the *Shāviṣirāvādi* and *Mahāsandhika* traditions are well known. Other than this, from the discussion over the epithets *Dharmakāra*, *Sravakākāra*, *Sambhorakāra* or *Nirmāṇakāra*, it appears as if Shudhodana's son Gautama, was believed to be *Nirmāṇakāra* by many. The connection between these three *kāras* regarding a historic character named Gautama, had led to much difference of opinion. It is the same story with regard to Christ. This difference of opinion has been growing through centuries in Christian society. An attentive observation of the history of various doctrines like Docetism, Adoptionism, Modalism, Arianism etc., will make this very clear.

According to one opinion, Ma is a spiritual aspirant par excellence. She has obtained a high position as a result of elevated spiritual practices in Her previous birth. But not having attained complete knowledge, She has been compelled to assume a human body again. Those who hold this opinion feel that Ma has obtained complete knowledge in this body, and is in the state of a *jīvanmukta* (one who has attained Liberation while living in the physical world) or a *sthitaprajña* (established in Knowledge of Reality). She has not felt the need of an external Guru in this birth — the Guru who resides within is inspiring Her whenever necessary. This is Her last birth.

But all do not accept this opinion. They think that some parts of the supernatural splendour and activities that can be observed in Ma's life, may be established as *siddhi* (superhuman power) and the actions of a *jīvanmukta*, but there have been many activities in the course of Her life which are difficult to understand. These activities may be a result of the expansion of *saṃskārās*, born of spiritual practices in previous births. In this opinion, Ma is neither a spiritual aspirant nor a *jīvanmukta*. If She is called a *jīvanmukta* then She should be called this from birth. Like a privileged person, She has taken birth to exhaust Her privilege. This privilege is also a kind of *prārabha* (karma).

Some people protest against this explanation. Because there is no evidence of any 'privilege-*saṃskāra*' in Ma's life. So much so that even the *saṃskāra* to bequeath knowledge and devotion on a *jīva* and uplift him is not present in Her. She has not allowed Herself to be accepted in the role of a Guru

uptil now. Although Her life and teaching are for the spiritual welfare of the world, She has no *samskara* to perform such welfare. In this opinion, Ma is an eternal *siddha* and of the nature of God's retinue. She has come into the world for some time for some particular work, by God's will. When the work is accomplished, She will return to where She has come from, of Herself.

But this opinion is also not universally acceptable. Some believe that Ma is *Mahadevi* Herself. She has assumed a human form for the welfare of the world in answer to the call of Her devotees. These people say that Ma's grandmother had prayed to the Kali at the Kasava temple saying, 'Let there be a daughter' instead of 'Let there be a son' for her son. Ma took birth as a result of this. They believe that a part of Goddess Kali Herself took birth as Ma.*

Yet others declare that rather than look upon Ma as Kali or Durga it is befitting to regard Her as the Primordial *Sakti*, *Mahamayā* Herself. Some (like Lavanya) have seen Her as Durga with ten arms. Then again some (like Nirmal Babu) have seen Her in the form of Saraswati, some (like Pramatha Nath) as *Chinnamasta* (the headless goddess), or some (like Pramatha Nath's peon) as *Dasa Mahavidya*. Further, so many other people have seen Ma in so many different forms.

*The Kali who appeared in the sky while Ma was staying at Dacca Shahbagh, and who was about to jump into Ma's lap, and because of whom the Kali image was lost at Dacca, can be understood to some extent by this opinion. Many people have seen the manifestation of Kali's form in Ma's body. For a long time, people called Ma, 'Manasa Kali'. Her identification with the Kali image has also been observed sometimes. While Ma was staying at Coxbazar, She realised that the jewels adorning the Kali image at Dacca had been stolen and She experienced suffering in Her own body.

Some people regard Her as a form of *Mahābhāvamayī* Rādhā. Some others believe Her to be the inspired form of Lord Krishna Himself.

(4)

In this way, so many different people have seen Ma in so many different ways. Amongst these, who sees the truth and who sees false? Because of difference in attitudes, one cannot rule out any of these as totally false. For Ma appears before each one in the very manner in which he sees Her or understands Her. Yet in our understanding, probably none of those is Her true identity. Once Sri Swami Dayananda, a propagator of the Bharati Dharma-Mahamandala asked Ma, "Ma, who are you? Some say you are an Incarnation, some say you are possessed by God, others say you are a spiritual aspirant or a *siddha jīva* (perfected human being). I desire to know who you are in very truth." Ma replied, "Babaji, what do you understand me to be? Whatever you understand, I am just that." It appears as if a hint of Ma's true identity is hidden mysteriously in this reply given by Ma. In the Gita God has declared, "Ye yathā mām prapadyante tamstaphalva bhujāmyaham" ("However men approach me, even so do I welcome them"). Ma's statement quoted above is also similar to this. There is no barrier of individuality or self-conceit within Ma by which She is limited. She is pure, immaculate, self-illuminated, and of the nature of immense existence, self-resplendent in Her own Greatness — but everyone cannot see this Reality of Her, because of their *samskaras*, for the mind cannot have darshan of Truth, without being freed from the

web of *samskāras*. Each person will see Her according to the way his mind is painted with his *samskāras*, and until he is freed from *samskāras* it is natural that he will see only thus.

Therefore, though it may not be the absolute truth, it is not right to totally disregard any opinion. For a follower of any particular belief, that view-point is worthy of respect, because his intellectual understanding sees only the greatness of that opinion.

But what does one gain by knowing all these opinions? As soon as an ordinary devoted person with a childlike, simple heart presents himself before Ma, he obtains the cool shade of Ma's motherly love, compassion and affection. Then gradually, by the influence of Ma's company, Ma's ultimate nature is revealed to him little by little. What is Ma? He will not feel the need of racking his brain over this question anymore.

(5)

Whatever Ma may be, we can experience many truths as we think over the divine *lila* performed by Her human body, which, from a human point of view, is indeed educative and worthy of remembrance for us all. How to attain to God, what kind of restraint, steadiness, detachment, asceticism and sacrifice are necessary; what is the nature and the result of spiritual practices by the paths of action, devotion, yoga and knowledge, what is penance, what is the meaning of complete self-surrender or the attitude of utter reliance; what is the effect of God-realisation on individual and social life we can find deep reflections on all these and other

similar questions in Ma's outward behaviour. These are not small matters. Though several subjects are discussed in the Scriptures, everyone cannot repose staunch, unquestioning faith in them equally without direct examples. But when these truths are evident in an animated form in someone's life, then unshakable faith in the words of the scriptures is aroused and our lives become pervaded by their import. Whatever Ma's true identity may be, the ordinary man cannot really understand even a trace of it without Her special grace, and even if he were to receive an indication of it he will not be able to realize it. But seeing the sequence of events in Ma's external life, and pondering over them, he can gain a lot on various matters. He may not understand the essence of Ma from Her life and teaching but he can find out the path of evolution towards his Self from Her life and can learn lessons about spiritual practices and behaviour from Her teaching.

Ma's life is not imitable in all its aspects — this is true. Because She is established in the knowledge of the Self, She is beyond existence and non-existence, free from duality and beyond the confines of scriptural injunctions. She is HERSELF and not imitable by anyone. Though in that condition She has no duties, because there is nothing unobtained for which She has to perform action, yet for the sake of tutoring the people and by the inspiration of Her nature, Her body does perform some actions which can be imitated by worldly people. All these actions are spontaneous and not prompted by Her own separate desires, what all the actions in the world of ignorance are performed because of the desires of the one

who performs them. Yet these particular actions of Ma are all imitable for beings in the world, Ma has Herself performed them to show ignorant beings how these actions are to be executed. Ma's objective is, that seeing Her conduct, human beings would be able to engage in these kinds of activities to some extent at least. In this situation, Her behaviour then is only play-acting, and this is strange play-acting, because it goes on of its own accord in Her body. Indeed, it is also true, that often many other actions as well emanate from Ma's body, which are difficult to comprehend, and which are clearly not imitable by anyone. But such actions are also for the welfare of all creatures and the world.*

Therefore, even if we say Ma is human Her greatness is not impaired and even if we glorify Her as an Incarnation or an eternal *Siddha*, Her eminence is not increased. Her existence and consciousness are based on equanimity. Small and big, praise and blame are both alike to Her. She cannot be elevated or lowered. The entire universe is Her home, all created beings are dear to Her. Established in Her own Nature, She sees Her Nature's play everywhere. Though an ordinary man becomes a doer and because of his pride, thinks he is independent, actually, whatever happens everywhere is only because of Her Nature. This is not understandable

* Ma often says, "Everything goes on in this body of itself, according to your needs." It appears from this that whenever any kind of activity occurs by Ma's body, it is not prompted by Her desire — it is natural. It is in accordance with the needs of someone or the other. It is true that man is not farsighted, therefore he cannot always observe the need, but the need is indeed there. Vyāsadeva in the *Yoga Bhāṣya* has written in connection with God assuming a body, "Tasya Atmā-nugrahathavepi bhūtanugraha eva prayojanam." This is also similar.

because of the veil of ignorance and therefore a sheath of the power of desire covers the play of *Mahāsakti* and the experience of its inevitable fruits, joys and sorrows, becomes unavoidable.

The consciousness in which Ma was established when She was engaged in household chores as a housewife, even now, after detachment from this, She is established in the same consciousness. Her condition is unsnakable. Her body has assumed various roles on different occasions alright — whenever it has been steeped in any *bhūva*, that acting has been achieved in the required manner — but She knows that She is where She is, and remaining thus She observes as a witness with unperturbed attitude the actions of Her body and the world which depends on the body.

It is difficult for an ordinary person to understand the condition of being a non-performing witness in the midst of action. Though established in the nature of consciousness, the play of *Sakti* goes on naturally, wherever and whenever it is to occur in whichever way, and will always continue — by this the non-attachment and detachment of the true *bhāva* is not reduced even infinitesimally. This is a mystery which is beyond the grasp of ordinary intelligence.

At the root of all human action lies the endeavour of acquiring the desired object or the sense of duty. That is, man indulges only in that action by which he believes he will gain happiness or be released from sorrow. Or at some stage he engages in action prompted by a sense of its propriety. The second aim is verily superior to the first one; and there are such examples to be found in the world. But One who

has gained all that can be coveted, Who delights in the Self, Who is totally contented, and Who is not lacking in anything, such an One is not shaken by desire for happiness or by the trials of pain because of being equanimous in joy and sorrow, and he has no duty either. And yet She performs action. That action is the action of True Nature. It is not inspired by desire or by the ego sense. In the heart which is not defiled by the pride of being the performer of action, where is the possibility of the arising of the sense of duty or the desire for the fruit of action? That action alone is the action of the non-performer, it is spontaneous action, faultless action. Such action, even though performed, amounts to non-action. This is self-sprung action which flows of its own accord and pervades the entire universe as an exhalation of *Bhagavati-Sakti*. This is in the form of divine *Shā*. It is not limited by the individual needs of the performer. The only purpose of this action is the welfare of the world. The ignorant being with his limited knowledge is unable to constantly grasp this goal which brings about welfare, but he cannot help accepting it.

We can see the following truths presented before us in the unfolding of Ma's life drama which She has acted out Herself

(a) The intense, restless yearning of the heart alone is the main aid to God-realisation. If God is to be realized, then day by day, month by month, year by year, always, and in every condition — sleeping, dreaming, waking, rising, sitting, in the beginning and accomplishing of all work, a kind of painful longing for God has to be kept alive. So that He cannot be

forgotten in any way by worldly enjoyment, wealth, comfort or luxury.

(b) As a consequence of this the heart gets absorbed in meditating on Him and a feeling of indifference is aroused towards whatever comes as an obstacle to meditation. In this way, renunciation of behaviour and tendencies which are opposed to spiritual *bhāva* is developed, and gradually detachment from worldly matters becomes firmly rooted.

(c) Then one should stay in solitude, absorbed in Him for awhile. There is no reason why one should feel the absence of a spiritual teacher, because instantly the heart itself is able to perform the work of a preceptor. Whichever form, name and attitude appeal to each one in the first stage, that should be used to support the meditation. Even if initiation has not been given, this should not cause any set-back. Gradually the time, measure and intensity of meditation should be increased, or rather they increase by themselves. Whenever the need for a Guru, mantra and chosen deity arises, they appear at all times of their own accord. Whatever is needed at each moment manifests appropriately. Unbroken remembrance of God is verily meditation and worship — one should make one's mind cooperate towards bringing this under one's control. Keeping one's gaze on His compassion and abandoning the desire for the fruit of action, one should persevere in the effort to the best of one's ability. Purity in diet and self-restraint, speech control, *mātra*, absence of worry, firmness in duty, good conduct, truthfulness, mercy, love, forgiveness and thoughtfulness — all these good qualities arise in the heart gradually, as they are needed. In this way purity of mind and heart is cultivated.

(d) By stages the feeling of mine and yours decreases. Even in the field of daily transactions, the feeling of mine and yours is removed. The entire universe begins to appear as an undivided family.

(e) Gradually the knots of the heart open up. Liberated *Šakti* begins to play with total freedom. The fetters of *samskāras* are cut.

(f) In this way, as one's spiritual practice gains strength, the brilliance of infinite and undivided Truth becomes accessible within the division (*khanda bhāva*) and then this sense of separateness (*khanda bhāva*) and actions in division cease forever. The knowledge of the indivisible truth within diversity becomes direct experience — it is no longer mere second hand knowledge arising from scriptural texts and argumentation. Therefore the heart of the person who gains this knowledge cannot harbour even a trace of sectarianism. An individual who can see the one and only great Truth pervading all the infinitely varied attitudes and opinions (*bhāvras*) is not bound by any special *bhāva*, and can yet experience its play.

(g) Watching the play of *bhāva* in this way, and giving up the domain of *bhāva* and going beyond it, his inner vision is illumined by the light of pure Knowledge. At that moment, the aspirant is enlightened by permanent and complete Truth and his total surrender finds its consummation therein. At that very moment the final offering of the I-ness is completed. Then there is nothing left of one's own desire or aversion. Everywhere, and in all activities only nature's play is perceived.

Ma says, "If you want to attain to the Lim tless, you have first to proceed confining yourself within limits, — later, by the light of the Infinite, the bondage of the limits is undone." We can see the truth of this clearly in Ma's life drama.

(6)

It may not be out of place to say a few words here about the authoress of this work, Srimati Gurupriya Devi. Gurupriya is Ma's single-minded devotee and attendant, and the daughter of the Civil Surgeon Sri Shashanka Mohan Mukhopadhyaya who later became Swami Akhandananda Giri. She had the good fortune of meeting Ma first in December 1925 — January 1926. Ever since, her close association with Ma has been continuous except for some separations by Ma's order. Though she has been constantly absorbed in Ma's service and engaged in various related activities, she has attempted to write down Ma's life and teachings sequentially and is still doing so. For this, all Ma's devotees are indebted to her. Gurupriya is a Brahmacharini, replete with asceticism and renunciation and above all is extraordinarily devoted to Ma ; moreover she is incomparably capable of subtle vision and skilful description, and has had the privilege of serving Ma and being in Her company to a very great extent. Therefore there is no doubt that she is specially suited to write this narrative. Needless to say, she has made use of this capacity and become blessed.

Sri Gopinath Kaviraj

SRI GURUPRIYA ANANDA GIRI
(1899—1980)

The author of these Volumes which are now in print in four languages was known to all devotees of the Mother as "Didi", that is "elder sister". She, in fact, held this position amongst the conclave of devotees for more than fifty years by virtue of her complete all-absorbing dedication to the Mother and her joyful acceptance of all those who were similarly oriented. Her world began and ended with Ma Anandamayi. She has left for us an ideal of one-pointed devotion, unquestioning obedience, and an unwavering attention toward the *kheyāla* of the Mother. From the moment of her first darshan to the moment in which she breathed her last, she was as if in the presence of God. She never deviated from this level of awareness by a look, word or gesture. The priest at the temple of Rameswaram was so struck by her air of constant waiting upon the *kheyāla* of the Mother that he exclaimed, "Surely, you are the Nandi for the Devi (Goddess)." This indeed, was high praise for Didi Gurupriya because since her childhood she had been very fond of the statue of Nandi, exemplifying one-pointed devotion to Siva.

Didi Gurupriya was born in February 1899 in Silchar, a town in Assam where her father Dr. Shashanka Mohan Mukherji (later Swami Akhandananda) was posted as Civil Surgeon. She was his fifth child and was affectionately named "Adarsh", that is 'the well-beloved'.

She was a shy studious child. Much of her time was taken up in helping her mother to look after the large household. Her free time she devoted to the reading of religious literature and the devotional songs of the many inspired bards of Bengal. Her memory was very good and she would often recite the long narrative poems of Tagore, later in life, much to the delight of the students of the Kanyaapeeth. Her pioneering qualities showed themselves early in life — She categorically refused to follow the conventional path of marriage and house-keeping. In those days, it was not considered seemly that a young woman should follow a career or live apart from her family. Didi's predilections were for an ascetic way of life which she followed at home by staying away from worldly affairs, eating the plainest food possible and dressing simply.

The supreme moment of her life came, when she visited Shabbagh for the first time and saw the Mother. To use her own words :

"I was very shy by nature. It was extremely difficult for me to talk to strangers or even to come out before visitors at home. My parents would scold me for this, but I could not get over my timidity. Yet I did not feel shy before Mother. I approached her confidently and stood near her as if I had always known her. It is beyond my power to describe the personality I saw. One look at that radiantly beauteous form, and my head, of its own accord, bowed down in adoration."

Mother on her part, spoke in welcome these significant words : "Where have you been all these days?" Didi found a ready niche in the ever growing family of Ma Anandamayi

who at that time (1925-26) was staying at the Shahbagh Gardens in Dacca. The most onerous role of the caretaker of the Mother's divine form came spontaneously to Didi. She would be constantly in attendance when Mother lay in deep samadhi or moved in ecstatic states during kirtans or cooked enormous meals for the concourse of devotees. Didi learnt to move confidently amongst strangers, communicate with people from other provinces, undertake the management of functions, travel long distances and sometimes also to live alone to practise *sādhanā*.

The most precious gift left as legacy to us by Didi are her diaries. She was in the habit of maintaining a diary in which is recorded the way of life for this group of people from the year 1926 up to almost the last years of her life. Her accounts are simply stated, with no sentimentality, idealizations or inexactitudes. She has recorded Mother's words with painstaking care. Of necessity the diaries are one-sided because Didi could write only about what she herself saw or heard; so she was obliged to be busy elsewhere rather than in the vicinity of the Mother she missed many important incidents. This however is not an irreparable loss and more books need to be written to supplement the diaries, which will ever remain the main stem of the profusely flowering tree of *śākha* of Sri Ma Anandamayi.

The highest tribute to Didi's memory was paid by the Mother when she said, "Has she not shown to all by the manner of her passing away the culmination of the *sādhanā* of one-pointed concentration? Was it not apparent that she merged herself with the *Iṣṭa* of her undeviating meditation?"

Didi had adopted unreservedly all those who came to the Mother in devotion and humility. She never tired of talking about Ma Anandamayi; she was closer to the devotees of the Mother than to her own family. Through the present translation of her diaries, the crystal-clear, pure stream of her devotion will, no doubt, touch and transform many hearts toward the quest for the only worthwhile ideal of human life: to live constantly in the thought of God.

Bithika Mukerji

TRANSLATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ma's way of working has always been wonderful, more so now, when Her physical presence is no longer with us but Her spiritual power is most tangibly evident. For it is that alone which has made this translation of Didi's invaluable diary possible. The work of rendering the first volume into English has been one of my most fulfilling and inspiring experiences and I delight at the thought that this experience will continue through the remaining volumes. As Didi has often stated, immense bliss can be derived by reading and reflecting over Ma's divine *lila*.

This translation would never have been begun without the encouragement and support of my husband, who has also typed the manuscript assiduously.

When I hesitantly put forth my desire to undertake this work, I was overjoyed to receive a greatly encouraging letter from Dr. G. N. Roy Misra, the President of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society. On his suggestion I began corresponding with respected Atmanandaji. My regard for her limitless energy and dedication to Ma's work grows with every letter that I receive from her. I express my sincere gratitude to her for her kindness in guiding me and editing the translation.

I am grateful to my parents for the help they have rendered with their knowledge of Bengali.

Over and over again I have felt deeply grateful to Didi for recording Ma's life so faithfully. If this translation makes the bliss of reading about Ma's life available to more devotees, it is due entirely to Ma's infinite grace.

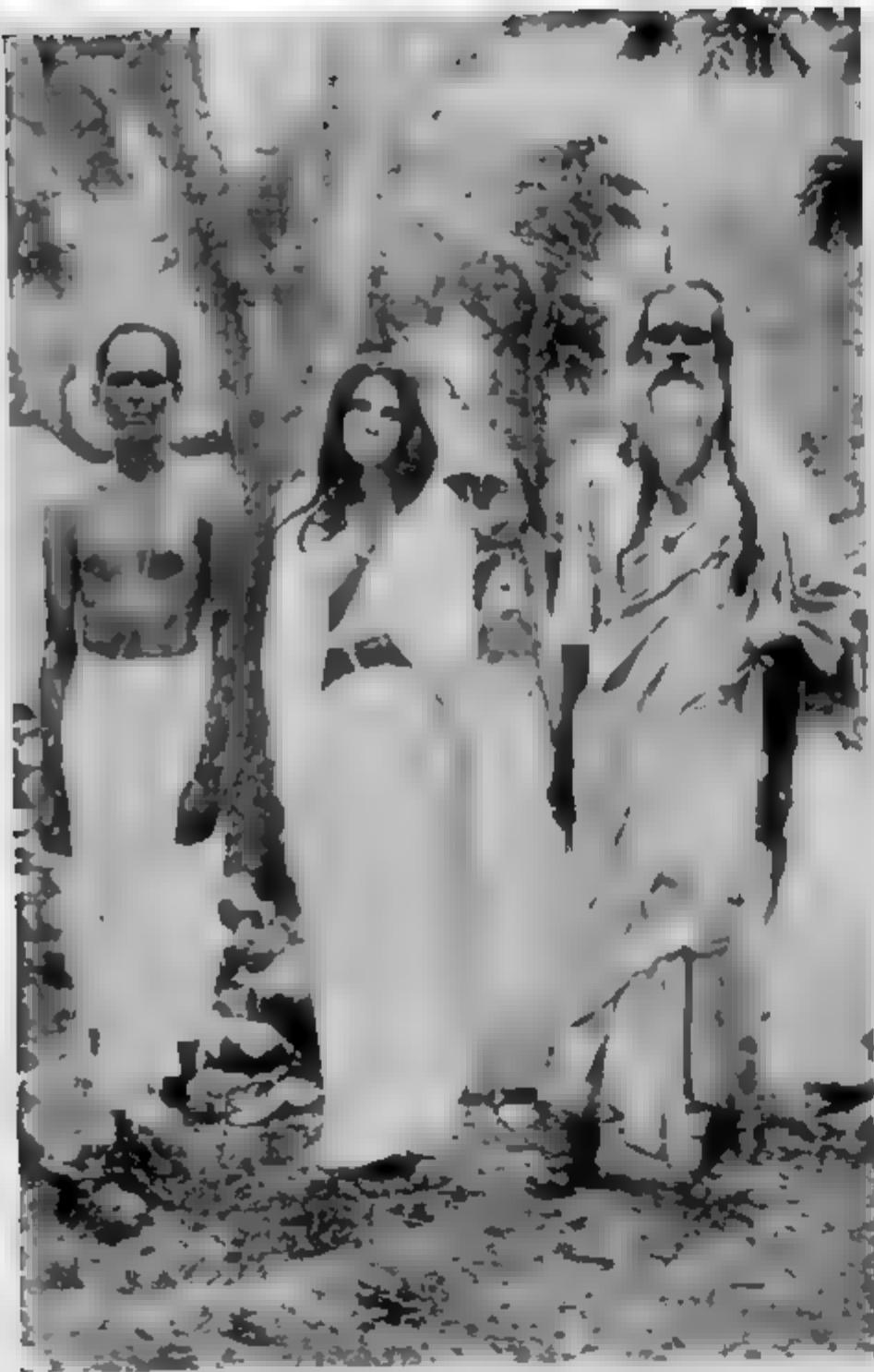
Jai Ma !

Bangalore, March 1984

Tara Kini



MA with Dadamashai & Didima



MA with Bhaiji & Bholanath

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF MA's EARLIER LIFE

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF MA'S EARLIER LIFE

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD (1896—1909)

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* was born on Thursday, 30th April 1896, between 3 and 4 a.m. in the village of Kheora in the Tripura district, East Bengal**. At that time her father Sri Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya and her mother Mokshada Sundari or Vidhumukhi Devi had abandoned their village Vidyakut and were staying in Kheora which was the home of Sri Bipin Bihari's grandfather.

Ma was her parents' second child. Before Ma, Ma's sister had been born, but the child did not live long, she passed away before Ma's birth. After Ma three brothers were born one after the other. They too did not live long. The eldest died at the age of seven. During his last moments, when the child was placed outside, he said to his mother three times, "Ma, I am dying", and breathed his last. The second boy had the mark of a king (*tilak*) on his forehead. So everybody remarked, "This child will not remain in a poor man's house". Before the death of this boy at the age of four, his grand-father saw the mark and said, "It seems as if he has shown a sign before leav-

* Ma's well-known name given by her mother is Nirmala Sundari. Further she was given five names Tirthavasini, Dāks̄ayan, Gajagangā, Nirmalā and Kamala. The name "Anandamayi Ma" was given to her by Sri Jyotish Chandra Rai in Dacca. Since then Ma is known everywhere by this very name.

** During Ma's birth it was the *Chathurthi Tithi* of *Krishnapaksha*.

ing. The third brother remained on this earth only for a month and a half. After these three brothers, two sisters Surabāla and Hemlata were born, and then a brother called Mākhan.

Since a baby girl had passed away before Ma's birth, Didimā (Ma's mother) put Ma under the *tulasi* (basil) plant for a while on the morning of the day after Ma was born and, for eighteen months, she would put the baby under the *tulasi* plant every day. When Ma grew up a little she used to roll beneath the plant on her own every day. At Ma's birth, Didimā did not suffer much labour pain. The delivery occurred after ten minutes of moderate pain. And another thing happened — Ma arrived and remained absolutely quiet, she did not cry as normal babies do. When Ma heard this, she said, "Why should I have cried? I was watching the mango tree through the apertures in the cane matting at that time". Even before Didimā realised that Ma had arrived in her womb, she saw images of various Gods and Goddesses in her dreams and dreamt that she had welcomed them and installed them in her home. Also after Ma's birth she kept on seeing them for several days.

Dādāmabāsaya (Ma's father) belongs to the Kāsyapa Gotra. The Kāsyapa of Vidyākūt are famous. There are several homes in Vidyākūt belonging to this caste. One lady of his maternal grandfather's family and one lady of Didimā's father's family, performed 'sati'. Dādāmāsāi's great grandmother also gave herself up for 'sati'. Some of his ancestors had attained *siddhi*. After the birth of his first daughter, Dādāmāsāi left his village. For three years he neither sent news about himself, nor did he ask for news about his home.

He left Didimā with her grandmother in Kheora. Later, when the baby girl passed away, there was no news of Dādāmāsāi. They were poor householders — it was difficult to get news. After some time, neighbours took pity on Didimā and sent a man in search of Dādāmāsāi. He returned home after having been absent for three years. It then became known that he had received the news of the death of his daughter, but had felt quite unconcerned. Sometime after this, Ma appeared in Didimā's womb. That is why Ma says sometimes, "Before this body appeared, Father had abandoned his home. He had even donned the saffron robe for some time and spent his days and nights singing God's praises. This body appeared during his mood of renunciation."

We hear that Dādāmāsāi's mother went to a famous Kali temple at Kasava to pray for a son for Bipin. But somehow she uttered "May a girl be born to Bipin". Sometime after the old lady's prayer, Ma appeared.

That Ma was not ordinary was obvious right from her childhood. From a tender age Ma was very cheerful. Her natural power of attraction was even then just as it is now. Everyone was extremely fond of her. Though Ma was born in the home of a poor man, she did not experience much difficulty because of the love of her parents. No one saw Didimā cry much because of the deaths of Ma's three younger brothers. If she ever did start crying, Ma would begin to weep so disconsolately that Didimā was forced to pacify herself and then quieten Ma. In this way Ma never let Didimā indulge in mourning. It seems as if Ma was always fully conscious of what she is. One day by way of conversation Ma asked Didimā, "Mother, did not

Sri Nandan Chakravarti (Didimā's uncle-in-law) come to see me on the thirteenth day after my birth?" Didimā had not remembered the fact at all. After pondering for sometime, Didimā recalled it. From childhood Ma went into ecstatic states when kirtan was going on far away while Ma was sleeping in the house. She says, "An unnatural state occurred within this body. But the room was dark and so neither father, mother or anybody else noticed it. And I also felt that no one should observe this. And so it appears that this state remained secret".*

When Ma was two years and ten month old, Didimā went to a neighbour's (Chandranath Bhattacharya) house for kirtan, carrying Ma in her arms. Seeing Ma shake and fall, she said, "Why do you sleep? Listen to the kirtan." Later on, Ma herself reminded Didimā of this incident and even told her to which house they had gone to listen to kirtan. When Ma told her this, Didimā also remembered it. Ma says, "The state that occurs during kirtan now is just the same as what used to occur then. It seems that it was not revealed then because the appropriate time had not come."

During her childhood, Ma went with Didimā's aunt-in-law to Chanla to see 'Mad Siva'. From the spot where Ma was

* Somebody questioned Ma in connection with her childhood about this matter, saying that at that time since no 'sādhanā' or spiritual practices had begun to occur in her body how did such activities happen? In reply to this Ma said, "Just as this body lived as a daughter-in-law and a daughter, similarly all these states also appeared to express themselves as if in play, through the conditions of the body. Because, going about like you all, what you call sāmādhā, and sometimes going into trance, or like you, seems to perform worship, all these are equally alike to this body".

Then I have also heard that Ma was never bound by space, time or circumstances. She played according to her kheyāls in her own nature, within herself.

seated, she saw Siva move from one place to another in a nearby pond. He was playing endlessly this way in the water. Ma also saw something else. It is said that this Siva is not always seen within the temple, he is a moving Siva

When Didimā used to sit down to feed Ma when Ma was small, Ma would become absent-minded. Didimā would shake her, saying: "You sit down for your meal and do not eat. Why do you look up?" Ma could not say anything. Later she disclosed that she used to watch some Gods and Goddesses coming and going.

Ma's nature was extremely simple; that is why everyone called Ma straight-forward and innocent. Didimā often said that she was very straight-forward and a simpleton. One day Ma was bringing a pot full of water from the pond. She pressed the pot to her side and came bent, looking crooked. She told Didimā, "You all call me straight and simple, haven't I become crooked now?"

Ma's formal education was rather poor. She went to a Primary School for a short time. The teacher of a Girls' School lived in the house of Ma's uncle. The teacher taught her the vowels—"অ, এ, ই". The very next day Ma read out all the vowels to him. Then he taught her the consonants 'ক, খ'. The very next day Ma learnt all the consonants. The teacher was amazed to see this and he thought that she must have surely learnt the alphabet earlier. But actually it was Ma's first introduction to a book. God alone knows how all this happened. Ma studied at that school only for a short time. Then she left for Kheora. The school teacher there was Ma's grand-uncle. Ma attended school rarely, because it was far

away and the ill-health of her younger brothers also prevented her from going on some days. It was true that she never studied but when she read to the master, everything turned out to be alright. Once Ma opened a book, just glanced at a poem and knew it by heart. That day an Inspector visited the school. He also opened the book and asked Ma to recite that very poem. She recited it well. Reading and memorising happened automatically. The principal promoted Ma and three other girls from the alphabets' class to the Lower Primary class, to raise the reputation of the school. Ma did not go to school often. When she went after a long break, she found that the girls had advanced a great deal. The teacher taught Ma all that the other girls had studied, in order to keep her at par with them. Ma's studies progressed nicely.

Dadamaśai told Ma one day, that she should pause only at a comma and a full stop while reading. Since it was Dadamaśai's instruction, Ma would read in one breath. If she had to stop to take breath in between, she would start from the beginning all over again. She would read holding her breath with great difficulty, contorting her body in this effort, until she came to a full stop and released her breath. When she had to enact tragic emotions, the emotion was shown by her body. When she had to display shyness, shy feelings were expressed by her body.

Both Hindus and Muslims loved Ma dearly as a child. Muslims always carried Ma about in their arms. Whenever Ma was put down on the ground, they lifted her up. Didimā believed that after the '*Anna Prasana*' (an infant's first partaking of rice) ceremony had been performed one had to bathe the baby if it was touched by a Muslim.

I am mentioning an incident which occurred during Ma's childhood when she was staying at Kheora. Ma was then a tiny girl. One day she noticed that there was only one ripe mango at the very peak of a tree. It was then the month of Vaishakh and mangoes had not ripened properly as yet. Some worship was being performed and everybody was buying mangoes for the worship. Ma asked Didimā, "Mother, won't you offer a mango for the worship?" Didimā replied, "From where can I get the money? Neither are there ripe mangoes on our tree. So how shall I offer a mango during worship?" Hearing this, Ma ran to the mango tree and found that very mango fallen to the ground. She picked it up and gave it to her mother. Referring to this incident, Ma said, "I was bound by the strict injunction not to touch another's property. Seeing me suddenly bring a ripe mango, Mother started scolding me, "You have brought a mango from someone else's house. There are no ripe mangoes on our tree." I told Mother, 'No Ma, I have not brought it from anybody's house. I found it there; you can go and look'."

MARRIAGE AND SUBSEQUENT LIFE (1909—1918)

On February 7th, 1909, at the age of twelve years and ten months, Sri Sr. Anandamayi Ma was married to the son of Sri Jagatbandhu Chakravarti of Atpara village and Tripurasundari of Vikrampur in Dacca. The bridegroom's name was Ramani Mohan Chakravarti, but later, at Dacca, he was called 'Bholanath' by devotees and as he was known everywhere by this name, I have also used the name 'Bholanath' in this text.

At the time of the wedding, Bholanath's mother was no more, but his father was alive. However, he died two years later. Bholanath had two elder brothers, Revati Mohan and Surendra Mohan and two younger brothers, Kamim Kumar and Yamini Kumar. He also had five sisters. After the marriage, Bholanath bought two books and gave them to Ma. But Ma found it very difficult to read joined alphabets and to read according to lines and paragraphs. Therefore She did not read any books after this.

Bholanath worked in the Police Department at the time of his marriage. Some time after his wedding, that is in the year 1910 in the month of August or September, he lost his job and for a few years remained unemployed. Ma stayed for four years after her marriage with her brother-in-law Revati Babu's family. He worked in the Railway Department as a station master in Sripur, Narundi and other places on the Dacca-Jagannath line. During this time in 1913, Ma's father left his

maternal grand-father's village Kheora and started living at his father's village Vidyakut. Ma's younger brother Makhan was born at about that time.

When staying at her brother-in-law's home, Ma performed all the house-work with her own hands and served her brother-in-law to the best of her ability. Ma's brother-in-law, too, was very fond of her. Ma was then very shy, and observed all the rules and regulations laid down for a daughter-in-law. At that time also, Ma sometimes went into states of *samādhi*, but people could not understand it. Sometimes such states would occur while she was cooking — people thought that this daughter-in-law was a rather sleepy one. Sometimes the rice and dal would fall to the ground. Then the brother-in-law's wife would arrive and scold her. Ma would get up shame-facedly, tidy up everything and cook again. Ma was always very cheerful and therefore was loved by everybody.*

After the death of her brother-in-law, Ma went for six months to his home in Atpara to stay with his wife. Then she was at her father's home at Vidyakut for six months. While Ma was at Atpara, Bholanath secured a job at Ashtagram in the Survey Department of the State of the Nawab of Dacca. So Ma went to join Bholanath and remained there for one year and four months.

In Ashtagram, the wife of Sri Jajshankar Sen began addressing Ma as "Happy Mother". Her son Sarada Sankar went to Ma to read out the Bhagavata. It seems fitting to mention

* I have learnt all these details from Ma's elder brother-in-law's wife and from Ma's sister-in-law. Later I went with Ma to Atpara, Bajtpur and other places and heard these incidents from the people there. I have gone to see all the places where Ma spent her earlier days.

here a few facts about Sen's brother-in-law, Sri Harkumar Rai

Harkumar had lost his mother before Ma came to Ashtagram. By sheer coincidence, Ma started staying in the room in which Harkumar's mother had lived. Because of this Harkumar began addressing Ma as 'Ma'. This was the first time that Ma was called 'Ma'. She was then about seventeen or eighteen years old. At times, Harkumar appeared to show signs of mental disturbance. When he was normal, he worked a great deal. He was not quite uneducated and had a good job. But he often went mad with religious fervour and so could not retain his job for long. Staying at his sister's house in Ashtagram, he took special care to see that Ma was not inconvenienced in any way. Ma never used to speak to him, she would remain veiled in his presence, but he bought leaves (used as plates) regularly every day for Ma from the market. At times Ma had difficulty in cooking because of damp and tender sticks that had to be used as firewood. Harkumar noticed this and got dry wood from somewhere or other, and said to Ma, "Take this, daughter, use it for your cooking." He earnestly requested Ma to speak to him but she never did. Neighbours looked askance at Harkumar giving so much attention to Ma, but he did not take any notice of this. He made it his daily duty to do *pranama* to her morning and evening. When Ma sat down to eat, he would extend his hand for *prasāda*. Ma would not only not give him *prasāda*, she would not even eat in front of him and would sit with her hands folded. After being frustrated in this manner for several days, Harkumar went to Bholanath and said, "Sir, I request

daughter with so much supplication, yet she refuses to give me *prasāda*." Ma also told Bholanath all about Harkumar. Hearing everything and seeing Harkumar's attitude, Bholanath said to Ma, "When he is so persistent, why don't you give him a bit of something when you eat?" At that time Ma would do anything that Bholanath asked her to do. After getting *prasāda* one day, Harkumar was present every single day when Ma sat down to eat — there was no exception. Sometimes he said to Ma, "Daughter, no one has recognised you." One day, when he was unable to make Ma speak to him in spite of several entreaties, he started exclaiming with vehemence, "Daughter, you are made of stone! For a whole year I have been asking you to speak to me but you do not say a word. If I were to call a stone 'Ma' the way I have called you, I would be able to put life into the stone. Bashfulness for a mother in front of her child — what kind of a thing is this?" Another day he said: "Daughter, you will see, now I am calling you Ma, one day the entire world will call you 'Ma'." Harkumar's prediction became true. But where is Harkumar today? A few days after Ma started speaking to him, he got a job and left for some other place.*

* After this Ma did not meet Harkumar for a long time. One day during the monsoon, Ma was sitting in her house in Bajtpur. Suddenly she told Bholanath, "I can hear Harkumar's song." Bholanath explained to Ma that this was quite unbelievable. But a few moments later, Harkumar arrived by boat with Kshetra Babu of Ashtagram. At that time he was not in a good condition mentally. Kshetra Babu said, "Harkumar was restless to see Ma once and therefore he has come with me." That was the last meeting. After that there was no more news of Harkumar. Harkumar had written several letters to Ma, in which he addressed Ma as 'Devi' or 'Goddess'.

It was Harkumar who saw the courtyard around the tulasi (basil) plant in Ma's house which was cleaned and plastered and was spick and span ; and it was he who first arranged to have kirtan performed there. Sometimes kirtan was sung there. When Ma was living at Ashtagram, kirtan was held at Gagan Rai's house. During that kirtan changes in Ma's body due to her *bhava* were noticed. When Ma's *bhavas* were first observed openly, she was about twenty-eight years old.

In Ashtagram, when Ma was going to a Brahmani temple close by, someone dressed her in a beautiful sari. Seeing Ma in this attire, Kshetra Babu of Ashtagram exclaimed "Devi!", and fell prostrate at her feet. Ma went into *bhava* on two days during kirtan at Ashtagram, and everybody was curious to witness and understand the phenomenon. Ma kept very well there for a while. Then she became indisposed for a short time. Soon after her recovery she went to Vidyakut and stayed there for about two years and eight months. She spent about four years in all at Ashtagram and Vidyakut. Bholanath remained at Ashtagram all along

IN BAJITPUR
(1918—1924)

Bholanath was transferred from Ashtagram to Bajitpur in spring 1918. Ma went from Vidyakut to Atpara, and from Atpara to Bajitpur. Bholanath was then working in the Survey Department. At that time Sri Bhoodev Chandra Basu became the Assistant Superintendent of the State of the Nawab of Bajitpur and remained there till 1922. Bhoodev Babu was the younger son-in-law of Rai-Bahadur Yogeshchandra Ghosh, the trustee of the Gardens of the Nawab of Dacca. Bhoodev Babu appointed Bholanath to the post of Law Clerk (munshi) in the State of the Nawab of Bajitpur. Bhoodev's wife became greatly attached to Ma and Ma was very fond of Bhoodev's children.

Just as before Ma used to go into trance during kirtan. Once Bhoodev's daughter was not well when kirtan was being performed at their house. Ma was seated next to the indisposed girl. Kirtan was going on outside. Ma signalled to Bhoodev's wife and beckoned to her, saying, "I do not know what my body is doing." Bhoodev's wife sprinkled water on Ma's head and fanned her and sent word to Bhoodev that Ma wanted to go to her residence. So she was taken by the hand and escorted home. Bhoodev instructed that this matter should be kept secret. Hearing that Ma felt unwell while listening to kirtan, he was rather displeased. He thought at that time that it was hysteria. It was only some time after Bhoodev left Bajitpur that people began to be aware of the

extraordinary nature of Ma's life. Ma's condition, which has been described already, became deeper and more intensive little by little. Before this, ordinary people did not understand it so well. Ma's style of living was very unusual at that time. Every day, her spiritual activities went on very regularly. She performed all her household chores during the day — serving her husband, cooking, washing utensils, sweeping the house and all other jobs that are done by an ordinary housewife were accomplished with skill. In the night, when Bholanath rested, she sat on the floor in one corner of the bedroom. At that time, several *kriyās* became manifest in her body, which were quite unheard of in the eyes of ordinary people. Various kinds of *āsanas* and forms of worship came about automatically. At that time, a bright light emanated from her body and therefore she often covered herself with a cloth. Bholanath lay on his cot. Sometimes he would keep watching all this until he fell asleep or at times he would sit up to observe. All these activities occurred when Ma was in a sitting posture.*

Effulgent Ma is a personification of purity. Every day she used to clean thoroughly the room where all these *kriyās* occurred, as well as the surrounding area upto a width of about two arms length. Not a speck of dust remained. She walked all around with a pot of burning incense (*dhoop*). Ma was then concealed — no one in particular could understand her. Yet nothing can remain totally secret for long. Through apertures in the cane matting some people had seen these

* The mud from the place where Ma sat during these *āsanas* etc. has been taken to the Kamma Ashram (at Dacca) and kept on the altar of the Panchavati there.

marvellous movements and other actions performed by Ma, but no one understood the real import of all this. Some believed that these actions were prompted by spirits and ghosts, others thought it was some kind of disease. On the basis of their individual beliefs people came and advised Bholanath to show Ma to some expert exorcist or physician.

Bholanath felt compelled to call a couple of exorcists but seeing Ma's condition, they exclaimed, "Ma! Ma!", prostrated before her and went away. Once an exorcist came to see Ma at night and sat in one corner of her room. Ma was seated in another corner. The exorcist performed various *kriyās* and went outside for a while. Then he returned and filled a pipe (*hookah*) with tobacco. Just as he was about to hand the pipe to Bholanath, he nearly collapsed. Bholanath supported him, yet the exorcist fell to the ground and started moaning. Then he began saying, "Ma! Ma!" nervously. Bholanath requested Ma, "Please do something to pacify this man." A strange condition became manifest in Ma — the man grew steady gradually. He recovered by degrees and then bowed down before Ma and left. While leaving he said, "This is not our work. She is verily *Bhagavati* Herself."

Dr. Mahendra Nandi of Kalikacch is a man of high calibre. He saw Ma once and told Bholanath, "These are all elevated states, and not any illness. Please do not expose her to the gaze of all and sundry." After this, Bholanath did not show Ma to anyone in particular.

From May 1922, there was a significant change in Ma's condition. Three months later, in August 1922, on the day of *Jhūlan Pūrṇimā*, Ma's initiation ceremony occurred spontane-

ously. For five months after the initiation, *āsanas*, *prāṇāyama*, *mudras* and other yogic activities manifested in Ma's body in a significant manner. Actually these yogic *kriyās* had already started earlier. Before stotras began to emanate from Ma's lips, the words "Om, Om" emerged first. One night, like in other nights, Ma was seated in a posture of prostration with her face downwards. When Bholanath awoke and sat up he saw Ma's fingers moving as if they were counting the repetition of God's name *japa* was on. Ma had seen her grandmother counting *japa* in this manner. Now she realised that her fingers were also counting the *japa* in the same way.

Before this phase of Ma's extraordinary conditions, all the people at Bajitpur loved Ma greatly and went to see her. But after these yogic *kriyas* began, everyone thought that Ma was possessed by spirits and they stopped visiting her. Ma welcomed the solitude and continued sitting to her heart's content.

One night, Ma was seated on her mattress, while Bholanath was lying down nearby. Ma felt as if her body had swelled and had become large and she realized that there was abnormal strength in it. In that condition, her hand chanced to touch Bholanath. He woke up with a start, and thinking it was the hand of a man, he concluded there was a robber in the room. Only Bholanath knew of all this. Ma forbade him to tell anyone about it and also told him not to worry.

Ma's maternal uncle's son, Nishikanta Bhattacharya, stayed with Ma for a few days. He did not approve of all these *āsanas* and other supernormal activities and therefore he spoke harshly to Bholanath. One day he was scolding Bholanath while Ma was seated in her room in a particular posture. Ma's

condition then was supernatural her head was not veiled and her body was not covered completely. Ma says, "I understood fully that my head and body were not covered properly but there was no feeling of shame to prompt me to arrange my clothes." Ma looked sharply at Nishikanta and spoke, no one knows what. Unnerved, Nishikanta moved two or three steps away.

Ma then laughed and said, "What are you afraid of?" He asked, "Who are you?" Ma revealed her identity. He questioned her again, "You perform all these yogic activities - have you received initiation?"

Ma : "Yes, I have."

Nishikanta : "Has Ramani Babu received initiation?"

Ma : "No. He will five months hence, on the 15th *Agrahāyan*, this particular week, at such and such a date, under this presiding star."

Nishikanta : "I did not understand the star."

Ma : "Janaki Babu is fishing in the pond Call him. He will understand."

Janaki Babu worked in the Nawab's state. His residence was near Ma's house. Ma was very fond of his wife Usha and called her "Usha Didi". Ma did not have any means of knowing (judging by outward appearance) that Janaki Babu was fishing, specially since it was time for him to go to office. He was called and he came. All these days Ma had not come out before him but that day she was not shy. She was seated in the room, her head uncovered, her appearance dishevelled. No one dared to touch Ma when she was in that state Janaki Babu understood about the star. Ma told Janaki Babu who

she was in reply to his question. This has been described elsewhere. Because of all this, Janaki Babu did not attend office that day. It was almost evening when he left.

Meanwhile Bholanath heard all that was being discussed. He decided that he would try to manouevre so that he could not be initiated on that particular day. He always used to have breakfast before leaving for office. But that day, in his anxiety to escape from being caught for initiation, he left without eating. At the appointed hour, Ma sent for him. He sent word that he could not come. Ma replied that if he did not come, she would be compelled to go to the office herself. Hearing this, Bholanath turned up without delay, for he knew Ma's nature very well. He was fully convinced that nothing is impossible for Ma. When he came home, he saw Ma pacing up and down. Incantations were emanating from her lips. Ma gave him a dhoti to wear and told him to bathe and come back. When he came after a bath, Ma told him to sit steadily on a small carpet (*asana*). Bholanath assumed the posture indicated and from Ma's holy mouth a 'bija' mantra emanated. Ma told Bholanath to repeat that very name, forbade him to eat meat and instructed him to live a life of purity. Bholanath began living accordingly.

In the Pausha month (probably on the 13th) of 1923, Ma began her period of silence which continued for nearly three years. Sometimes a line would be drawn by her, incantations and invocations would emerge from Ma's mouth and then Ma could speak. But there was no definite time for drawing such a line. Ma had also stopped visiting people's houses.

The celebration of Kali Puja at Bajitpur is worth mentioning. This worship was a family tradition from Bholanath's father's side. It was performed regularly every year.* Once raw rice was cleaned with great care for preparing and offering during this worship, but a crow polluted it by pecking at it. So some more raw rice was sifted, cleaned and presented. The offering was made from this rice. Ma was unable to do the cooking herself. Some other lady had cooked. Ma was seated at the entrance to the kitchen while the rest of the people were sitting in the room in which the worship was being performed. Since the offering was to be taken after the worship, Ma sat at the entrance of the kitchen so that the offering could not be polluted. Ma saw vividly and clearly that a fair Brahmin emerged from the right side of her body, entered the room, took a piece of the offering arranged on a stone plate, and put it into his mouth. Then he disappeared. Later, when Bholanath arrived to take the offering, two or three men walked by his side to ensure that the offering remained unpolluted. Just as Bholanath took the offering and started off, a dog came from somewhere and touched the offering. Immediately Bholanath threw the offering by the side of the pond and went for a bath. As it was nearly night, it was not possible to purchase rice again. So Bholanath said to Ma, "If Ma agrees,

* On the day after the Kali puja, Bholanath used to call almost all the people he knew for taking *prasada*. He derived great pleasure from entertaining people to meals, so he would invite anybody he saw to come and partake of the *prasada*. This way a good number of people received *prasada*. But no arrangements were made beforehand. Every year it went on this way. Everyone had his fill with whatever had been prepared. The number of people could not be anticipated, yet there was never a shortage of any item.

then please use the rice pecked by the crow for the offering." They were compelled to do that. The dal and vegetables were ready. The rice was cooked quickly and offered. Ma related to Bholanath all that she had seen and Bholanath repeated it to the priest. The priest sat down to eat. After hearing everything, he said, "That offering is the genuine offering, because it has been accepted by Bhairava. It is a special *prasāda*. Bring me a little of that." But that offering had already been thrown into the water.

At that time Bhoodev was in Bajipur. His residence was spacious and therefore the worship had been performed at his house. Both residences were nearby.

Sri Ras Bihari Ghosh preceded Bhoodev in his official posting at Bajipur. Sri Ras Bihari Ghosh's daughter (the wife of Sri Jagannath Basu) was named Usha and Ma called her Usha Didi. Ras Bihari's wife also loved Ma greatly. Ma called her 'aunt'. Everyone was very fond of Ma. Many marvelling at the glow of Ma's wonderful countenance. Bhoodev's wife once said, "When 'Khushir Ma' comes to the pond, the ghats are lit up by her radiant beauty". So some people called her "Rangadidi". Because of Ma's blissful nature, many people called her "Khushir Ma", The Mother of Happiness.

There was a gentleman in Ashtagram, whom Ma considered to be like a brother and who called Ma 'Rangadidi'. He was reading out some religious book to Ma. After a while he looked at Ma and felt she was not listening at all. Ma was sitting very still. He rose slowly with the book. After that he never again tried to read out to Ma.

Once during Śivarātri, Dādāmaśāi (Ma's father) was fasting. Ma and Bholanath also fasted during Śivarātri. There were four *vigrahas* of Śiva, one for Dādāmaśāi, two for Ma and Bholanath and one for someone else. Dādāmaśāi was performing the worship alone. When he began to worship one image, suddenly Ma started uttering all kinds of mantras. Later Dādāmaśāi said, "This happened because I started worshipping Ma's *vigraha* of Śiva."

IN DACCA SHAHBAGH
(1924)

Bholanath lost his job towards the end of 1923. He became very worried. Feeling that he might secure a job in Dacca, he went there in March or April 1924. Ma was also with him. When he could not find any job after searching here and there in Dacca, he decided to send Ma home. Ma requested him to wait and watch for three days. Within those three days, on the third day of the Vaishakh month (May 1924), he was appointed manager of the gardens belonging to the Nawab of Shahbagh.

Shahbagh is a huge garden. Arrangements were made for Bholanath's residence in the garden. A house was provided for him to stay in. In addition there was a big hall with two small rooms on either side. Another small hall was called the 'dining room'.

Ma was still in a state of silence when she came to Shahbagh. This condition continued for nearly one and a half years in Shahbagh. Besides, several kinds of rules and restrictions were being maintained regarding her diet. For about seven or eight months, Ma ate only three mouthfuls every day. Even if she ate fruit she would not take it into her mouth more than thrice and would not even sip water after that. Then began the routine of living on fruits only. But she forbade any arrangements to be made to procure these fruits, she depended only on what came of itself. At that time particularly, yogic activities were manifesting in Ma's body and for seven months there was no menstruation. Then the periods became normal for some time and stopped altogether when Ma was twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old.

Ma used to perform all the household chores. During that time Mākhan (Jadunath Bhattacharya, Ma's younger brother) and Āshu (Bholanath's nephew) stayed there. They were studying at school. Meals had to be prepared in the morning for them. After they had eaten, Ma would wash the utensils and have her bath. Then she would fetch water from the pond and cook food to be offered to God. After the offering had been made, Bholanath would have his meal. Ma did all the jobs alone, from grinding spices and peeling vegetables to all the other housework. At that time an attitude of total absorption persisted day and night. Several times Ma would be found lying on the floor — she would try to do some work and suddenly lose outer consciousness and fall down. Afterwards, when this condition passed, she would rise and complete the unfinished job. At that time Ma always had her face covered with her sari. But whenever a line was drawn and Ma began to speak, the cloth never stayed upon her head.

The description of the Kali puja during Deepavali is presented in the text. It occurred in the Kartik month (November) 1925. The next year, 1926, Kali puja was also performed during Deepavali — the history of this Kali image is given in this text. This Kali was not immersed in water after the puja, the image is present even today. The Siddheshwari incident occurred in the Bhadrapad month (August-September) 1924. Ma was then not quite unknown though she was not very well-known outside. Some devotees were coming to her almost daily. Prangopal Babu, Pramatha Babu, Baul Babu, Nani Babu, Nishi Babu and many others went to Ma now and then for satsang.

SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

VOLUME I

SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

Volume I

CHAPTER I

It was in December 1925 or early January 1926 that I first met Ma. My father, Sri Sashanka Mohan Mukhopadhyaya (a retired Civil Surgeon) had heard of Ma from First darshan the Deputy Postmaster General Sri Pramatha Nath Basu and went twice to see her, after which he took me to Ma. Ma was then staying at Dacca Shahbagh where Baba Bholanath was at that time the manager of that garden. The sprawling, well laid out garden, was a fitting place for Ma to live in.

I never went out much. I could not speak to strangers — women or men — so peculiar was my nature. My parents used to get very upset about this, but I could neither look at strangers, nor converse with them. It was also against my nature to visit any saint or holy person. But on the day after Father saw Ma and spoke about her, I felt extremely restless. I had a desire to go and see Ma, but did not say anything to Father and he went alone in the evening. I remember clearly that when Father's carriage left, I stood on the veranda facing the road and cried bitterly. How extraordinary it was that I was so upset because I could not go to one whom I had never seen, about whom I knew nothing at all! Even to this day I feel wonder-struck when I remember thus. But I now under-

stand why I cried at that time and what kind of an attraction it was. When Father returned, I went to hear all that Ma had spoken. Father related some things, but I was not satisfied. Father said, "Ma has asked me to take you to her." I felt that perhaps Ma had asked Father to bring me after hearing all about me from him.

The next afternoon, I went to Shahbagh to see Ma. The moment I saw her I went and stood close to her as if I had always known her. That day I felt no shyness on meeting an unknown person. I gazed at her for a long time and prostrated before her. How shall I describe the image which I saw — my head bowed down of its own accord at her feet. Ma's head was covered with a large veil, she wore a sari with a broad red border and on her forehead was a big red mark. Her countenance glowed with a supernatural effulgence, both eyes were flushed and sparkling, as if she were absorbed in *bhāva*. Her speech was very soft and indistinct — I had heard that she had started speaking only recently after maintaining silence (*mauna*) for three years. But later I realised that this was not quite the reason. When Ma kept quiet for a little while, her entire body including her tongue became numb. Ma, Bholanath, Ma's widowed sister-in-law, Matari Pisiṇā, Ma's brother-in-law's son, Ashu and a nephew, Amulya stayed in the garden. When Ashu returned from school Ma went to serve him his meal. But her hands had gone out of control. She served with great difficulty and then came and sat near me, after spreading something for me to sit on. Then she prepared a betel leaf and gave it to me. I said, "I never eat betel leaves." Ma replied, "I eat betel leaves and so I have given

it to you also." I found myself saying, "Alright, since it is from you, I shall eat it." I noticed that Ma was so immersed in *bhāva* that she was barely able to keep her eyes open. I had never before seen such a state. I watched enthralled and felt grateful that I had at last found what I had been longing for all along. I do not remember exactly what conversation took place between us. I sometimes intended to address Ma respectfully with the pronoun, "Øpmi" but it became the familiar "tumi". I kept sitting very close to her without being aware of it. The room in which we were sitting was used as a storehouse: the next room was slightly bigger and Ma slept in it; behind it was a small room where Matari Pisiṇā lived with the children. Ma stayed in the small hall adjoining these three rooms. A little distance away I could see two roofs. Vegetarian and non-vegetarian food was cooked there. I had heard that every day food was offered to the Deities first.

Ma spoke a few words as she closed the door to the middle room in which Bholanath and Father were seated. She then started speaking familiarly to me. Suddenly she said, "Where have you been all these days?" She laughed and kept looking at me. As she was speaking her *bhāva* became more intense. She said, "Sit here, I'll come soon." I replied immediately, "What is this, I have come to meet you. You cannot go just now" I had thought that probably Ma would get up and go elsewhere. But no: Ma lay down on the ground close to me. I had read Ramakrishna Deva's life, so I realized that this was 'samādhi'. I closed my eyes and sat quietly, touching Ma's body. After a long time, Ma got up. It was as if her body were powerless. I thought that to attain a little steadiness, man has to practise

so much, but here I was witnessing Ma constantly in *bhāva*. When she rose she spoke with a very indistinct voice, but after a while her speech became clearer. Then conversation went on for a long time.

I put my head in Ma's lap and lay down while Ma kept on talking. Pramatha Nath's son Pratul, wanting to see Ma, opened the door just then. He is a very staunch devotee of Ma and has been coming to her for a long time. His father is also greatly devoted to Ma. My father called me, saying, "Get up, let us go! Several other devotees have come to see Ma." The door was opened. I bowed down before Ma and came away. As we were leaving, Ma told Father to bring me again.

I felt as if intoxicated and went again the next day, saw Ma, heard her speak and came back. But then I just could not remain at peace at home. Every day, whenever I found an opportunity, I would go to Ma. The entire day and night were spent waiting for that moment. I became so restless for Ma that I sometimes went to her twice a day. Gradually we became more intimate. I sometimes helped Ma with her work and assisted her in serving food. I heard that Sri Pran Gopal Mukhopadhyaya, Postmaster General; Sri Baul Chandra Basak, Professor in a Law College; Nani Babu, Professor in Dacca College; Sri Nishikanta Mitra, Zamindar of Samsidhi in Vikrampur and others often came to see Ma. When Pran Gopal was transferred elsewhere, his post was occupied by Pramatha who also used to come to Ma every day with his family. All these people were householders, so they could not stay for long and not all were Brahmins, so could not help

Ma with the cooking. When I came to Ma regularly, she expressed great happiness and said, "God has sent you. Now this body is unable to do all the work properly, that is why God has brought you here to assist me." I heard that Ma had been alone till recently, but as she would most of the time be immersed in *bhāva*, Bholanath's widowed sister Matari Pismā had come to help with cooking and other house-work. Ma just does not like widows to cook fish and so whenever fish had to be offered in the daily worship, Ma somehow managed to cook it herself, while Matari Pismā did all the vegetarian cooking.

I heard that Ma had another sister-in-law --- the wife of Sri Kali Prasanna Kushari. When she had come to Ma during the holidays in December 1925, Ma and she had eaten from the same plate.

Girls from the house of Rai Babadur Sri Yogesh Chandra Ghosh regularly visited Ma. The wife of Prafulla, the third son of Yogesh Chandra, loved Ma very much. She used to say, "I went every day to the garden to see the daughter-in-law of Shahbagh. I used to wait eagerly for that time between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. My mother-in-law would say, 'Can you not practise religion at home? What is pulling you there every day?' I did not go to Shahbagh for the sake of religion. But if I did not see that daughter-in-law even for a day I would become very restless and long to go to her. I could not think of anything except 'That daughter-in-law of Shahbagh'."

I was also greatly attracted towards that 'daughter-in-law'. I found several examples of Ma's intense attraction of this

kind. At that time there were still not too many people visiting Ma. I heard that Jyotish Chandra Rai (I.S.O., Personal Assistant to the Director of Agriculture, Bengal), had come a few months ago to visit Ma. He did not come often himself but sent employees working under him to Shahbagh to enquire about Ma. Later I heard that when he saw Ma's head covered with a long veil, he thought, "I came thinking this was Ma, but a Mother with such a big veil! It is obviously not yet time for us to come." Thinking thus, he did not go to Ma himself but sent others to get news of Ma. Jyotish Dada always thought a great deal before acting. This time also he pondered deeply and kept away.

I gradually started spending more and more time with Ma. Ma would talk of past events on several occasions, and I would listen enraptured. I had never before heard such things. We slowly became like members of the household at Shahbagh. New people started coming, but Ma kept her head covered with a veil and came and sat near everybody only in obedience to Bholanath's orders. She would utter a couple of sentences if necessary and only with Bholanath's permission. After the gentlemen departed, Ma would sometimes sit and talk to us with great joy. At times her tongue would become absolutely stiff and she was unable to speak. Ma also told me a lot about her various conditions. Ma had never before had a companion like myself who was always near her, eager to listen to her, so she would open her heart and speak joyfully on many matters. I was simply enchanted. Every day I returned home for a short while and then would come back to Ma again.

Ma never gave the left-overs of her food from her plate (made of leaves) to anybody. Nor would she let others take the dust off her feet — everyone prostrated on the ground from a distance and Ma folded her hands in greeting. If anyone touched Ma's feet and bowed down to her, she would immediately touch his feet in return and bow down herself. So no one dared touch her feet. As soon as the meal was cooked, Ma and Bholanath would go inside and offer the food to God. Then everybody would receive *prasada*. Ma took her *prasada* on Bholanath's leaf-plate. When we first went to Ma, she was eating three morsels of food on Mondays and Thursdays. On the other five days of the week, she ate nine grains of boiled rice, and nothing else. But she did a lot of work. As far as possible, she never failed in her service of Bholanath. I have never seen such unwavering devotion to the husband anywhere else. She obeyed him like a child — she never tried to reason with him.

One day, either on a Monday or Thursday, Father invited Ma and took her to our house at Tikatuli, to offer food (*bhoga*) to her. Ma came there for the first time.

Ma's *bhoga* in
our house —
Winter 1926

Bholanath and a few others were with her. Ma went through all the rooms of the house.

Reaching the veranda facing the road, she said, "When I first came to Dacca, I used to walk down this road and I have washed my feet at this tap several times (a tap was fitted on the road right in front of the house.) This house was then under construction. I said to myself, 'It must be the residence of some *Sahib*'. See, I had noticed this building right in the beginning. Baba was working in the post

of a Sahib, so I was not wrong." Saying this, Ma began to laugh. We were very happy to hear that she had already noticed this house earlier.

Just before the food was offered, Nishi Babu came in great agitation and bowed before Ma. He told her that his grandson was afflicted with a swelling in the ear and was in a miserable condition, and he prayed to Ma to be gracious enough to go to his house just for a few minutes. Nishi Babu's house was close by. Father wanted to get a conveyance. But Ma, the Compassionate One, on hearing a devotee's distressed prayer, set out immediately on foot. She returned a little later. I do not know what she did there. Ma does not usually reveal one person's affairs to another. But we saw that the swelling in the child's ear burst of its own accord and the boy recovered. While going, Ma had asked me, "Will the boy get alright?" I replied immediately, "Since you are going there, he is sure to get well." Ma had asked me this thrice and each time I replied emphatically in the same way. Ma laughed and said to all present: "Since she is saying the boy will get well, he will be alright." With this remark she left.*

Ma returned from Nishi Babu's house and sat down. It was the day on which Ma ate three morsels of food. Ma told

* Later also I have witnessed similar occurrences. When anything of this kind took place, Ma would question anyone who was near her as to what would happen. Good or bad, she would elicit the reply from the other person, she would never say anything herself. If anyone was unable to reply clearly, she would say, "The way he is speaking, does not augur well." The surprising thing is that although we know this, when we are questioned as to whether it will be good or bad, we are not always able to say, "It will be good." It is as if the reply were inhibited. And later, truly, something would go wrong in that matter. Ma would thus make others speak out.

Bholanath, "You eat now, I'll eat later." When Bholanath got up after his meal Ma pointed towards me and asked him, "May I eat with her from the same leaf?" He replied, "Alright, do! But Doctor Babu has brought you to his house for the first time and made all these elaborate arrangements, so you will have to eat everything." Ma changed her routine as far as possible to obey Bholanath's orders. Ma's routine never got fixed by her own desire — whatever had to happen, happened of itself. One kind of routine would continue for a few days, then it would change. She always tried to obey Bholanath's orders. Bholanath also rarely objected to Ma's ways, because he knew that whatever Ma did was for the best. Hearing Bholanath's command, Ma laughingly held my hand and made me get up, saying, "Come on, let us eat together. Ever since I am in this condition, I do not eat with anyone. My sister-in-law (the wife of Kali Prasanna Kushari) had come and I had eaten with her. And today I shall eat with you."

I had stopped eating fish and meat for quite sometime. I never ate meat and had also given up fish completely for the last two years. Even before that I rarely ate it. Ma was being served fish, so if I was to eat with Ma I would have to eat fish, but seeing Ma, I felt I did not have the capacity to go against her command. Not unwillingly, but joyfully, I accepted her order. I had given up fish against the advice of my closest relatives, but that day I was unable to disobey Ma.

I went with Ma and sat down to eat off Bholanath's leaf-plate. Ma was then eating with her own hands. Ma ate a bit of rice and fish herself, and then fed me some of it. I said,

"I shall eat whatever you give me." My relatives were pleased and told her, "Do please order her to eat fish henceforth!" But Ma smilingly replied, "No, I won't. She will eat fish only when she eats with me, not at other times." In those days, I used to eat mostly rice cooked with potatoes, but Ma fed me with so much fish curry that everyone thought it would make me ill. They had known Ma only for a short time and several of them were not aware of Ma's power and hence such thoughts occurred to them. I said laughingly, "You are not eating, you are only feeding me." Ma also laughed and replied, "Today I have fed you. In future you will feed me." I did not understand what Ma meant. Ma left for Shahbagh in the evening.

A few days after this, a solar eclipse occurred on *Pousha Sankranti* day (14th January). Many people decided to gather that day at Shahbagh and perform kirtan in Ma's presence and receive *prasāda* and they started making arrangements. We reached in

Solar eclipse festival, 14th January 1926

the morning and found that Ma was peeling vegetables and she asked me to join her. Many people were to receive *prasāda*. Baul and his wife came and helped Ma. Ma got the vegetables ready and then went to get rice, dal and other things cleaned for cooking. Devendra Kushari and several other devotees were going to cook. Matori Pisumā was of course present. Father performed *puashcharan* (repetition of God's name with a fixed arm) during the eclipse. He did not go home that day and sat down to do *upā*. Ma herself washed the vessels needed for the worship and cleared a place for Father to perform the puja

Kirtan started as soon as the eclipse began. Gradually, Pramatha Babu's wife, Nishi Babu's wife and other ladies came to Ma, bowed down to her and sat in the circular room near the dance hall where the kirtan was going on. Seeing Ma's exalted spiritual condition, the landlords had become devoted to Ma and festivities went on everywhere in Ma's honour. With her own hands Ma offered *sindur* (red powder) to all the assembled ladies, and spread mats for them to sit on. There was no shortcoming in any job that she performed.

Meanwhile everything was organised in the kitchen. Then Ma went and sat with the ladies in the circular room. Ma did not usually sit on any mat or carpet, she would sit on the floor and also lie down on the bare ground. Quite often Ma would be in *samādhi* the whole day, lying on the floor. Sometimes I have seen Ma's face and hands covered with ants while Ma lay like a stone in one corner. That day, also, she went and sat on the floor in one corner. She had covered her head and body properly with her clothes. I have noticed that Ma never leaves her head or body uncovered, the body is always completely covered. Kirtan was going on. It was about afternoon, we were all sitting near Ma. Suddenly Ma's body started swaying. Her sāri fell back from her head, her eyes were closed and her entire body vibrated to the rhythm of the *nāma kirtana*. She rose, still swaying. It seemed as if she had left her body and that some invisible force was controlling various activities which started manifesting in her body. It was obvious to all of us that there was no will motivating her actions. She was so oblivious about herself that even her clothes were slipping off. At that time Ma never wore

a blouse. She wore her sari in such a way that her shoulders were not visible. The ladies now tied a sheet tightly over her body. Ma's body would start falling, but it would rise before touching the ground. It seemed as if it had no weight and was fluttering in the wind. She started roaming around the whole room, as if intoxicated by an unusual inebriation. It was not exactly like that either — words cannot describe what we saw. I had never seen anything like this in my life, I had only read about such exalted states in the lives of Chaitanya-deva and Ramakrishna-deva. Today, witnessing such a state with my own eyes, I was enraptured. What a wonderful condition it was! The same person who had been performing so much work just a while ago, was now transported, one does not know where. This state was beyond the intellectual grasp of ordinary people. Roaming about in this manner, Ma crossed the veranda, slowly joined the group of kirtan singers, and began to revolve in their midst. Her eyes were turned upward without a flicker of the eyelids, her face was shining with a supernatural glow, and her whole body was covered with a blood-red effulgence. Suddenly, as we were watching her, she fell onto the ground from the standing position. But it did not seem that she was hurt even slightly. As I have said, it was as if her body were moved by the wind. It seemed to have rolled to the ground along with the breeze. As it fell, the body started rotating fast, just like a leaf or a paper blown about by a cyclone. We tried to hold down the body but it was impossible to control that speed. After a while Ma became still and sat up. Her eyes were closed and she was seated in a yogic posture, steady, grave, motionless. I went to call

Father who was in Ma's bedroom, doing *japa*, so that he could witness Ma's condition. I said, "See, what a marvellous state this is. I have never before seen anything so wonderful." But Father would not stop his *japa* and get up, the eclipse was not yet over. A little later, Ma got up in the same dishevelled condition and walked up to the room where Father was sitting and doing *japa*. She suddenly opened the door of the room and entered it alone. I do not know what she did there. She came out a moment later, closed the door and came back to the kirtan the same way. But Father did not see Ma. Ma sat down and started singing, first softly, and then loudly and clearly — "*Hare Murdhe Madhu Kaitabhāre, Gopāla Govinda Mukunda Saure.*" She started roaming around, singing just this much. What a beautiful voice it was! Even to this day, the hairs of my body stand on end at the remembrance. I have never heard such a sweet sound. Everything was new. Everyone was witnessing for the first time this *bhāva* of Ma which had remained very secret all these days. She had never appeared in this manner during kirtan in front of everybody. Ma sat quietly for a while, then her body fell to the ground. There was no pulsation at all, the breathing was very faint and slow. The eclipse was over. Father got up, came out of the bedroom and saw Ma, her attire dishevelled, her hair falling all over, sitting huddled up. Father fell to the ground and prostrated before her.

It was evening. Bholanath called out to Ma several times and finally roused her. Even then, Ma's body was limp, she was unable to rearrange her clothes, so we did this for her. She could not speak, her tongue was completely stiff. On

Bholanath's request, Ma got up somehow, but her limbs were not yet under control. Bholanath took Ma round the kitchen and then to the bedroom, where Ma sat down on the floor. Gradually, as she began to speak a little to everybody, her speech became slightly clearer. Slowly the discomfort in her body lessened. I started stroking her. Ma said, "All is not right within the body — something has happened." Her eyes were still filled with tears. Evening came on. Bholanath asked that sugar puffs (*batasā*) should be taken to the kirtan. Ma rearranged the clothes covering her head and body, and carried the sugar puffs in a brass plate herself. She gave me a brass plate with chopped fruit and went to the kirtan. The puffs were kept on one side and so also the fruits. Water was served in glasses. Kirtan was resumed vigorously. It was evening. Ma covered her head and sat with the ladies in one corner of the kirtan room on the floor. After a while, the same *bhāva* came on. New kinds of activities began manifesting in Ma's body. This time the serene look in her eyes was replaced by a terrible frown for some time. Her feet and both hands were moving in such a way that only those who saw it could comprehend. Sometimes only one foot moved in such a manner that it seemed as if she was waging a battle; Siva's *tandava* dance was going on. The complexion of her body, was not a glowing pink, it seemed as if a black shadow had covered it. After a while that mood changed. At times it looked as if she were performing *arati* (waving lights in front of a deity) with her whole body, it seemed as if her body was offering itself as an oblation. A variety of moods were manifested. Finally she sat down. Yet it appeared as if some

words were trying to force their way out but were not emerging and no sound was emanating. After several attempts, wonderful incantations and invocations started pouring from her lips. How beautiful the sound was, and how clear and lovely the pronunciation, but no one could understand the language. Several syllables were sounding like seed mantras but nothing was comprehensible. Slowly the incantations ceased. Gradually Ma became quiet and sat quite still. After a few moments, she lay down.

Now since it was very late in the night and since several devotees had been fasting the whole day, Bholanath thought they should be given *prasāda*. He was therefore making several attempts to rouse Ma, but Ma was unable to get up. With slurred speech she murmured, "I am unable to get up, the body is helpless." Then we all kept rubbing and massaging Ma's body; after a long time Ma rose and sat up. She was trying to set her clothing right, but as her hands were not functioning properly, she was not able to do it. And seeing this, she was laughing at herself like a child. She was also not able to keep her eyes open properly, but her countenance was radiant in her *bhāva* and the smile on her face looked extremely sweet.

A few moments later, Ma stood up and went towards her bedroom. All the items for offering to God were ready in that room. Ma and Bholanath entered. Incense was burnt and lamps were lit and the door was closed. After offering the food to God, both of them came out. Many people were to receive *prasāda*, so arrangements were made to serve the food in the main hall, where the kirtan was performed. Ma told

Bholanath, "Please sit and eat with these people. Khukuni and I will serve, and we shall eat later." Everyone sat down to eat as per Ma's bidding.

An incident occurred during all this. When Ma sat down for the kirtan all the ladies sat surrounding her. Since they were in Ma's proximity, no one felt shy. A man was standing some distance away, and nobody paid any special attention to him, but Ma's gaze from within her veil fell upon him and rested there. Slowly, her gaze became so piercing that the man was unable to bear it and he turned his eyes downward. Ma's sharp gaze became serene. She laughed softly and said, pointing towards the man, "These ladies have come out in front of everyone today because of me. You must not stare at any of them. You may look only at me; this will not affect me in any way. But beware, do not stare at anyone else!" No one understood why Ma spoke in this fashion. Several newcomers had come then and people did not know each other very well. When Ma spoke in this way to a gentleman, everyone's attention was attracted towards what was going on.

After that, all were busy with the kirtan and arranging for the meal and so no one paid much heed to the matter. When everyone sat down to eat, that gentleman refused to join them. Ma and I started serving. Ma had tied her sari round her waist, and now seemed a different personality. Seeing that that gentleman was refusing to dine, everyone began requesting him to eat. He said "I shall not eat. Ma is angry with me." Ma was then serving nearby. Without raising her head as she served *kichuri* (rice, dal and vegetable cooked together), she

said almost to herself, "Ma never gets angry with anybody" The above mentioned gentleman also heard this. When everyone requested him again, he sat down but was unable to eat much.

It was about midnight when everybody finished eating and Ma and I sat down together for our meal. Bholanath told Ma, "Please eat everything properly today." Accordingly Ma did not eat as per her usual routine, but ate a little more.

The topic of Ma's piercing gaze at the gentleman was raised. Ma only said this much, "See, it is just not as if I stared at him in that manner out of anger or by my own will. My gaze falls on each person in a manner depending on the feelings and thoughts within that person. He feels afraid and thinks that since Ma is angry she has looked in this way. But though my gaze somehow becomes like that on occasions, there is not a trace of anger at all within me." After much conversation of this nature, we prostrated before Ma and took leave of her. Ma also went to rest.

The next day we heard in the Ashram that Ma had lain on her mattress only for a while, after which she had sat on the floor. Ma often remains in this way. Sometimes she stays with her face to the ground (like when prostrating) for a long time. Ma is not bound by time. It is the same to her whether it be day or night. I do not notice any conventions with her like having to sleep at night, or keep awake during the day — whatever moods arise in her body at whichever time, she just acts accordingly. She says, "You all feel that morning, evening, noon and night are different times and you feel differently. I do not feel that at all, it seems as if all times

are exactly the same to me, I do not see any difference whatever.'

That day, at the crack of dawn, Ma sat down on the floor and closing her eyes, kept her head on the chouki. Early morning that gentleman came and bowed before Ma and sat at a little distance with his head bent down. Seeing the delay in Ma's rising, he asked Bholanath, "When will Ma get up?" Bholanath called out to Ma once or twice and made her sit up. Ma looked at the gentleman. The gentleman bowed down again and asked Bholanath, "I have come to inquire why Ma looked at me that way yesterday and why she said those words to me." I do not remember exactly what Ma replied. Hearing her answer, the gentleman wholeheartedly poured out the entire story of his life before Ma. He also started talking about his feelings. The gist of what he said is, "I can never look upon any woman as a mother, I get only feelings of a lover. I am educated but I cannot change these feelings at all. I have to tolerate much harangue by elder brothers at home because of this, but what can be done? I cannot feel the reverence due to a mother towards women". He also said, "Today for the first time I have called you 'Ma' and bowed down before you as a mother. Till today I have never been able to address anybody as 'Ma'." Ma gave him some advice and said, "Come here every day. But you must not look at any woman's face, you should look at their feet only." I saw that he sat near Ma every day. If any other lady entered the room, he would always cover his head with a cloth and sit with his head bent. When Ma gave him permission to leave, he would take some *prasada* and go. Later I heard that this man's character has been trans-

formed; he now lives properly with his family and is also employed.

A drum and cymbals (*kartala*) were lying at Shahbagh. One evening Ma said, "What is the harm in having a little *nama kirtana* every evening? The drum and cymbals are here anyway." On hearing this Ashu, Amulya and others sat down along with Bholanath to sing *kirtan*. Ma also sat with

Injunction to have kirtan regularly at Shahbagh

them and so did we and some *kirtan* was performed. Gradually a few other people started arriving in the evenings and participated in the *kirtan*. Though Bholanath did not know singing, he used to perform *nama kirtana* vigorously with much joy. In this way, singing *kirtan* every day was begun. I used to bring sugar puffs and they were distributed as *prasada*. Every day, Ma would go into *bhava* slightly and on some days the *bhava* was very deep. Occasionally incantations would emanate from her lips, but no one could understand the meaning of the language.

On *Sankranti* day, after Ma had been through such a state, several people came for Ma's darshan. Many also offered food. Ma too cooked food and all those who were present, obtained *prasada*. Ma had made a rule that whatever was brought, (even green chillies), it was to be cooked that very day and distributed and nothing was to be retained in the house. And people to be fed also gathered at the correct time. After this, Ma started the routine of eating three grains of cooked rice daily.

Pramatha Nath was getting transferred, so he wanted to eat food cooked by Ma herself before leaving. Therefore he sent

various kinds of ingredients to Ma's house. Bholanath came to our place and invited us to come and have *prasāda*. The offering was to be made at night. Father had been taking for years only milk and some sweet every night. If he ate anything more, his health would get upset. Ma had heard this and therefore she sent word saying, "Let Father eat milk and fruit during the day, then the night meal will not harm him." Ma's order was obeyed. We arrived in the afternoon. Ma was working in the kitchen, and was about to prepare fish chops and cutlets etc. I was helping her. I realised that Ma was adept in everything. Whatever she did was done very skillfully. Her work was very neat, clean and quick. The food was ready and Ma's face was glowing from the heat of the fire, but her smile was always there. The food was offered in the evening. Bholanath, Pramatha Nath, Father and two or three others sat down to eat. Ma said she would eat later. Ma and I served. I was noticing various novel features of Ma's personality in each activity. Seeing her thus, it was hard to believe that the same person had been in all those states during kirtan. Of course, on close scrutiny the supernatural expression of her eyes was evident even while she was working. Her speech was indistinct most of the time. It became clear after she spoke for a while. Otherwise she cooked quietly and was silent while serving, though her hands performed a lot of work. At that time, if anyone began to speak, I have often observed that words would not come from her lips. If she kept quiet for a little, her speech stopped. And if she did not have any work on her hands and sat still, her eyes closed instantly, she kept swaying or suddenly lay down and reached

such a state that it was difficult to rouse her. Not only during kirtan but at other times also, she used to have *bhāvas*. But it was mostly during kirtan that various *bijas* would begin. Everyone finished eating. Ma always ate off Bholanath's leaf plate. That day Ma and I sat together to eat. After eating and drinking we spent some time near Ma and then all of us returned to our homes.

*

It was the day of Sri Saraswati Puja. The students of the Medical School were going to feed beggars and have a kirtan performance.

They wanted Ma to be present, but Father refused. Ma had such *bhāvas* during kirtan. If it were to happen in the school, outsiders would not understand this condition and one could not know who would view it from which angle and how they would

comment. Ma was then keeping herself veiled; considering all this, the invitation was refused. Kirtan would be performed in Shahbagh and whoever wanted could go and see. Ma had once said, "I can see beggars being fed." I was influenced by this statement and on the occasion of the death anniversary of my mother I organised a meal for beggars. My joy was in taking Ma there.

The owners of Shahbagh did not grant permission to have the feast for beggars in the garden, as they thought that plants and trees might be damaged. Perchance the poor feeding was arranged at the Medical School itself. Food for almost three thousand people was prepared. Devotees of Ma and the students of the school made all arrangements. We took Ma

Feeding beggars
and serving God
in the guise of
the poor
(Dand
Nārāyaṇa)—
February 1926

and Bholanath with us on the eve of the day of the feeding and decided to stay there over night. Ma ordered that no cooking was to be started before the morning, for stale food was not to be served to *Daridra Nārāyana* (God in the form of the poor). Vegetables were being cut. Ma said, "We shall also cut some vegetables, we should work for the food to be offered to *Daridra Nārāyana*." So we sat upstairs and peeled vegetables.

The next morning the people who had been fixed to come and cook did not turn up. A devotee named Mathur Babu (who worked in the Police Department), bowed before Ma and said, "The Brahmins who were to cook the meal have not yet come and it is already morning." Ma said, "Come on, we shall start the cooking." By Ma's grace Mathur Babu after a little while brought the Brahmins who were to cook, and there was no need for us to start the cooking. The whole night Ma did not let any of us sleep. She said, "If you want to serve *Daridra Nārāyana*, keep awake tonight. Before every work, self-control has to be practised with perseverance." In the morning she said to me, "Pray to *Daridra Nārāyana* so that he will be present at your function." Then she at once said, "Will all the *Nārāyanas* come alright?" Somehow I stammered while replying, "If you so desire they will come." Ma said, "See how she speaks — it seems as if there will be some confusion."

What has to happen will happen. From about eleven o'clock in the morning the boys started kirtan. The image of Goddess Saraswati was still there. Ma laughed and said, "These boys wanted this body to be present for Saraswati *pūjā*,

I have come while the image is still here." The kirtan gathered intensity. Ma became engrossed in *bhāva*. Various kinds of *kriyās* began manifesting in her body. That day also, for a few moments, she assumed a wrathful posture with upturned eyes as if she were holding a sword and battling with someone. With the onset of this mood, Ma's tongue protruded. Within a few seconds the tongue went in and there was a change in the mood. Ma now assumed a very serene aspect, full of *bhāva*. Sometimes it seemed as if she were seated on an *Asana* performing worship — she was worshipping herself. Sometimes touching her own feet with her forehead she prostrated and then became powerless. Sometimes she revolved with great speed and rolled on the ground and then became very still and lay on her back. Her breathing was such that it seemed as if waves were playing about from the navel to the throat. Then again she would lie inert. I sat and carried her in my lap. Her whole body was as cold as stone. As she became a little steady, saliva started pouring from her mouth in an impossible profusion. All my clothes got wet. Tears came gushing out of her eyes and her dress was soaked in tears. Then again suddenly, her body became lifeless. Her fingers and nails turned black, and her face turned yellow like that of a corpse. One could not make out whether her pulse was beating or not, nor were there any signs of breathing. We became terrified, but Ma had told us earlier, "You should perform *nāma kirtana*. If this body is to recover it will do so only because of this." Therefore if Ma went into such states we would only perform *nāma kirtana*. Bholanath also sang a lot of *nāma kirtana*.

The kirtan was going on on the second floor. At that time Father was standing in the kitchen downstairs. A man went to Father and said, "Go upstairs and see how Ma is completely immersed in a wonderful *bhāva*." Father ran upstairs, but he saw that Ma was seated with her hair all scattered and her head bent down. Father very sorrowfully thought : "Today I was duped. I did not get a glimpse of that aspect of yours." Recalling thus he sat down to do *japa*. After awhile his eyes opened suddenly — looking towards Ma he saw that her face was jet black and her lips seemed red. He did not see her tongue protruding. Father said, "I fixed my gaze and stared two or three times, wondering whether it was an illusion of the eyes. But it was no illusion, I saw that form clearly. A little later the colour changed and her natural fair complexion returned." Ma lay down after sometime. When she sat up again, invocations started pouring from her lips in a stream, just like before. A little later *prasāda* was distributed. Ma calmed down slightly and lay down.

At three o'clock she was roused after several attempts. Now the *Daridra Nārāyanas* were to be seated for their meal. Ma rose, having recovered slightly. She looked through the grill at the beggars who had assembled. She said, "I do not see a big crowd. Arrangements are ready for three thousand. I doubt if there are even half the number. I had said in the morning that they would bungle today." Ma was taken downstairs where the food was ready. That day no special offering was to be made. Ma was to see the preparations and then *prasāda* was to be distributed as per the schedule and so Father took Ma downstairs. Ma placed her hand on my shoulder and

went all round and saw everything. I remember to this day, the way in which Ma gazed from within her veil, how she rotated her eyes and looked at everything at once. Ma said, "I shall also serve a little." Everyone started shouting victory to Ma. Ma tied the end of her sari round her waist and served. A leper arrived. Ma fed him with special affection. Later Ma wanted to pick up the left-overs of *Daridra Nārāyaṇa* (to clean the place), but Bholanath forbade it and so she restrained from doing so. Devotees and the students of the school cleared up the left-overs. Several ladies had turned up to watch the feeding. Ma said, "Today we are all poor, we will all obtain this *prasāda*." And so it was. All sat together to receive *prasāda*. No distinction existed between rich and poor. *Daridra Nārāyaṇa* sat down to eat. It became terribly dark and began to rain. All were seated in the field for the meal. Suddenly Ma went out of the room towards the field and started sauntering about. After completing their meal they all got up and Ma went inside the room and sat down. Then the rain started pouring. We reckoned that Ma had started walking about outside so that the meal would not be spoilt by the rain. I have seen a similar thing once or twice later on.

In the night, after entrusting the entire burden of organisation to a gentleman, Ma went to the field where the poor had been fed and sat down to eat in the darkness, saying, "Today we are also beggars. Give us alms." The gentleman who had been put in charge, quickly brought food and began serving Ma. All the people sat around Ma. Ma did not allow a light to be brought. She said, "Why, do

beggars light a lamp and eat?" After eating, everyone took leave slowly. Finally Ma came away along with us. A lot of items had remained. It was decided that they would be distributed the next day. Ma said, "I shall not come again tomorrow." She came to Tikatuli for the night and went to Shabbagh the next day.

A certain boy, who saw Ma during the *Dandra Narayana* feast, had been greatly impressed. He was studying law at

The story of the orphan Dacca and stayed in a mess close to the Medical School. We heard later, that on that

day he had become restless for a glimpse of Ma during the night. The next morning, he opened the door of his room, plucked some flowers and then closed the door and sat with one-pointed concentration, calling out to Ma the whole day. He believed that Ma would definitely come to his room in response to his call and that he could then offer the flowers at her feet. He kept sitting the entire day without eating and with the door shut. None of his relatives knew where Ma stayed. On enquiring at the Medical School, the only information they gleaned from the boys was that Ma was the Guru-Ma of Shashanka Babu* and that Shashanka Babu went to her every day.

Actually, Ma does not give initiation to anyone. The boys turned up at our house and got the Shabbagh address from Father. They took the orphaned boy to Shabbagh in the evening. We also went there. The boy prostrated before Ma, and remained thus. We then heard that Ma had been restless

* Shashanka Babu—Garugriya Didi's Father

to go out since the afternoon and the feeling of wanting to go towards the Medical School had risen within her. But the previous day she had come away saying, "I shall not come here to-morrow. You have taken the responsibility, you distribute everything." So she was waiting for nightfall to go there. Ma said, "I do not do anything from my own will, but what an uncommonly strong urge I had to go there!"

Meanwhile the orphan's friends and relatives had forced open the door and taken him to Ma. We were left speechless when we heard the whole story. Kirtan was performed. But the orphan was still lying prostrate in order to touch the dust of Ma's feet. Ma does not allow anyone to touch her feet. Much time passed and it was late in the night. Ma was sitting veiled even at that time. Finding no other solution, Bholanath said to Ma, "Since this boy has been pining for you the whole day long, let him touch your feet today." Ma always tried to obey Bholanath's orders somehow or other. That day Bholanath was repeatedly asking her the same thing. But Ma kept sitting steadily. After a while Ma got up slowly. Her face became red and she stood with her weight on the two big toes of her feet. Bholanath signalled and the orphan and all others who were present became blessed on obtaining the dust of Ma's feet.

The orphan's joy was boundless. Ma and Bholanath went to eat. The orphan kept sitting with the desire of taking *prasada* from Ma's leaf-plate before leaving. Ma did not normally give that to anyone. But that time the orphan was successful

in all his attempts. Ma made me arrange nicely on a small silver plate all the vegetables and rice, and then putting on a long veil, Annapūrṇa herself went to distribute *prasāda*. Ma picked up one morsel at a time and kept her hand steady in one position. First the orphan, and then everyone else extended their hands below Ma's hand and Ma released each morsel and picked up another one. In this way, that day, because of the orphan, all received the dust of Ma's feet and her *prasāda* and felt blessed. Then everyone bowed down to Ma and took leave. Probably the orphan stayed there that day and again touched Ma's feet the next afternoon. A rule was made that for five months all could receive the dust of Ma's feet on those two dates of every month during that particular time.

The next month on those two dates, all the devotees, having heard this story, turned up at the particular time. Ma who was veiled, was swaying where she sat. Everybody was looking at the clock, but Ma was sitting with her eyes shut. At the correct time, Ma stood up and everyone hastened to take the dust off her feet. Ma stood with eyes closed and hands folded. As the minutes' hand reached 2.10, Ma sat down, then rolled on the ground and prostrated. But this rule was in force only for the two days in that month, after which it stopped.

After this the orphan and some other boys from the Medical School kept visiting Ma. Gradually Sitanath, Subodh, Jatu, Postmaster Surendra Babu, Girija Babu, Vinay Babu, Kedar master and many others started coming. The kirtan too was performed beautifully.

One day Ma, describing the story of her earlier life, said, "There is no end to the kinds of states that occurred, but none persisted for very long, it was as if one state after the other passed over this body." Ma's own description of her earlier life She had baths in the morning for a few days. She gave up eating food cooked by others for some time and paid great emphasis on traditional rituals in her daily behaviour.

Ma would say : "A space of two arm length on all four sides outside the room in which all these activities occurred, I kept so clean that not even a straw touched the room. I lit the incense container and walked all round with it." She also said, "I was not aware of how the days and nights passed". Having completed the service of Bholanath, she used to go and sit down. She ate her midday meal on some days in the late hours of the night, and did not eat at all on other days. If she was touched by anybody an extraordinary condition came on. She would say, "I would be seated on a chouki, may be some person's clothing touched the chouki from behind, this body would begin to sway. I did not see it, yet by the state of the body I would come to know that I had been touched." Then she would also relate how all these rules would come to an end. "I went to apply *sindur* (vermillion) to a girl at her wedding. Ever since I can touch everybody." Ma would say, "Before I got into this stage at Bajipur, everybody loved me very much and came to see me all the time. But when this condition came on everyone thought that I was possessed by evil spirits and they stopped coming. That was good, because I

had solitude and could sit down and call out to the One to my heart's content. Everything was thus accomplished beautifully".

In connection with her childhood, Ma once said, "During my childhood when I sat down to eat I used to become absent-minded. Ma would shake me and scold me, saying, 'You are sitting down to eat but your attention is somewhere else. Why do you look upwards?' I was unable to say anything. Now I can tell you that I used to watch images of many Gods and Goddesses coming and going."

One day she said laughingly, "Everyone called me straightforward when I was a child. Mother particularly always said, 'She is very straight and simple, there is no cleverness or shrewdness at all in her'. One day I brought a pitcher of water from the pond and balanced it on my hip, standing crookedly and said to Mother, "You all call me straightforward. Haven't I become crooked now?" Hearing this we all laughed. Ma also started laughing. I said highly amused, "Now your Mother can see how her straight-forward daughter has made so many people go crazy!"

One day I saw that Ma was suddenly having a terrible cold. Later I learnt the cause of it. Pramatha Nath's son Pratul had said to Ma, "I feel I am getting a cold. My examinations are nearing. Please see that I do not have a cold during the time of my examination" As a result of this request, his cold decreased and Ma caught a cold during his exams.

Taking on other people's Jnesses

One day Pramatha Nath's wife said to Ma, "Ma, I shall keep a vow of silence (*mauna*, on Mondays.) (Ma keeps the method of telling almost all people to observe silence taking and breaking the vow of periodically.) On hearing this, Ma said, "That silence (*mauna*) is good, keep it that way." Now Pramatha Nath said to Ma, "Ma, my wife should not go ahead of me. If she keeps *mauna* on Mondays, I shall observe *mauna* a day before that, on Sundays." Ma expressed her approval of that also. He was a very devout man. During the previous Pausha Sankranti, in the night when there was kirtan he was so overwhelmed by emotion that he got up and danced. He would come near Ma and sit quietly, perform *ndma-japa*, bow to her and leave. This was his routine every evening. He questioned Ma privately about how the vow of silence was to be kept in the best possible manner. Ma showed him a *kriyā*. He took the vow of silence on Sunday with that *kriyā*. On Monday, when he tried to speak the words would not come out. He was a big officer. So many people were seated with papers and letters, but the great problem was that he was unable to speak. Pratul came to Shahbagh and told Ma about the whole situation and took her along. Ma went and taught him the *kriyā* for breaking silence, after which Pramatha Nath was able to speak. Ma said "Having learnt the method by which speech was to be inhibited you performed the needful and adopted silence. But you did not know the method by which the silence was to be broken. Hence the confusion."

One day Ma went to the Siddheshwari temple taking us with her. There, one spot was surrounded by bamboos and

The story of
Siddheshwari

in the centre was a small altar made of bricks and mud. On all four sides basil plants and one or two flowering shrubs had been grown. The Bhairavi who served at the Kali temple at Siddheshwari used to light a lamp there. Ma went to that place and sat down for a very long time. Then she came away.

The Kali temple at Siddheshwari is a very ancient one. A huge peepal tree has been uprooted and is lying there, but the tree has not withered. A fresh tree is growing out of its roots. We heard that this tree also has some wonderful greatness.

It seems worth mentioning here the early history of Siddheshwari, as I heard it from Ma. Ma says, "As soon as it was evening, I used to finish my work and come to the Kali temple at Ramna and sometimes keep sitting or lie down flat in the posture of prostrating. In this way most of the night would pass. One day I heard that a rule had been made by which the door of the Kali temple would be closed at ten o'clock in the night. At that very time I said to Atal and two or three other persons, 'Come, let us go and see the Kali at Ramna'. Saying this, we went out along with those people. It was already ten o'clock while we were on our way. Everybody began saying that we would not be able to have *darshan* of the Goddess now because the door would be closed. I said, 'Since we have started, let's go.' As we were entering the gateway of the Kali temple, an incident occurred. It was seen at exactly that time, that a widow along with a boy

and a girl went past us without noticing us and quickly entered the temple. We went and saw that the same woman was prostrating and then leaving the temple. The temple door was open. Everyone asked in surprise, "Is the door open even at this hour?" Then we came to know that the woman was a disciple of the *mahantri* of the temple. The door had been opened because she had arrived. As we reached, the woman left. The surprising thing was that we did not meet that woman anywhere else on the way. We just met her suddenly at the gateway in this manner. The question as to why this woman had come here alone so late at night did not arise in anyone's mind.

Later that woman came to me in Shahbagh with her four years old daughter to tell me that the girl was unable to walk properly. I do not know what came out of my mouth. Later, one day, the woman returned and said, "Ma, after praying to you the girl has become alright." I did not notice the little girl but when the widow came to me at Shahbagh I noticed her particularly.

At that time one day in the month of Sravan, in the year when Bholanath got his job, Baul said to us on the way while returning to Shahbagh with us, 'One day I shall take you all to Siddheshwari.' We had met and got acquainted with Baul only a few days ago at the Ramna temple. Something which happened even earlier was that in Bajitpur one day a tree appeared in front of my eyes and I felt as if it was the tree in Siddheshwari. After that when we came to Shahbagh I asked Bholanath one day, 'Where is the tree of Siddheshwari?' Bholanath could not tell me. Later we heard the above

sentence from Baul I signalled to Bholanath and forbade him to reveal what I had said earlier about Siddheshwari. After this Baul came and took us to Siddheshwari one night. As soon as I saw the peepal tree which had fallen, I touched it and kept my hands on its leaves. I understood that this was the same tree which I had seen. We heard from Baul that long ago there had been no temple here. Later a *sāmnyasi* named Samvarvan had established this temple. Here three trees were growing together, hence it was named '*Tintiri*'. Now two of the trees are no more — only this peepal tree remains. Some say that a light emerged from this peepal tree and was absorbed in the Kali image inside the temple. We saw the temple with the help of a lantern and came away. At that time none of these buildings and rooms existed at Siddheshwari.

"After this we went again to Siddheshwari with Baul. We found that the door was locked. I held the lock and pulled it and it opened right away. Baul said, 'This has happened because of Ma's wish.' But we had to stay all night for how could we leave the temple open? In the morning we just left the lock open and came back. The Mahant of Siddheshwari had been informed of this. He saw the lock open and thought that probably the lock had not been fastened properly while being closed. I had forbidden Baul to tell anyone that the lock had not been open earlier and that it opened when I pulled it.

"One day, some time later, I said to Bholanath, 'Go to the market and buy one and a quarter seers of potatoes, one and a quarter seers of green gram dal, one coconut and some rice. Do not bargain.' Bholanath bought potatoes, rice and coconut,

but the green gram dal was not available. A few days before this I had been to the house of Dvijendra Babu, the lawyer, at Narayanganj. He was the maternal uncle of Ashu (Bholanathji's brother's son). He was very fond of me. He had taken me to his house because of his son's illness. I had seen green gram dal at his place. I had one and a half seers of the green gram brought from there. They did not want to take the price of the dal, but then I sent word through Ashu that I had need of it and if they refused to take its price I could not use it. They know my condition. So they were compelled to accept the money. In this way, having cleaned it, and made everything ready, I said one day to Bholanath, 'Come, let us go to Siddheshwari.' Bholanath never put obstacles in my way. He set out. Makhan* was then staying at Shahbagh with us. He was having high fever. After the death of Surabala (Ma's sister) he had come to us. But my attention did not go towards that in the least. I went and cooked all the items at Siddheshwari and after offering them to the deity we ate. I had cooked green gram dal, coconut fry and rice with potatoes. Then I said to Bholanath, 'I shall stay here.' It was decided that Father would be at Siddheshwari during the day and Bholanath would come after evening. I said I would stay in the small room near the Kali temple. And so it was. I used to bathe very early in the morning and go into the room, after which I would not come out of the room again throughout the day and night. No food was eaten the whole day long. At night Baul would arrive with fruits, singing away. Very late in the night, the fruits were offered to

* Makhan Sri Ma's youngest brother

God and eaten. At first I used to do the offering as you have also seen I arranged everything and sat down — later I got up and said, 'The offering is done.' Sometimes the Mahanta used to leave flowers and sandalwood at night. May be I offered the flowers to Kali. But all this offering, worship etc. happened in a supernatural way. In this way food was offered. Later I said to Bholanath, 'It seems as if this is not in my power. You perform the offering of food with the recitation of your mantra.' He did so. In this way seven days passed. Bholanath lived in one corner of the Kali temple. Sometimes he did his own work, sometimes he slept. I also stayed at the Kali temple in the night. In the morning after having my bath I used to enter the small room Baul stayed at the gateway of the temple.

"On the eighth day it rained heavily in the morning. I signalled to Bholanath (at that time the three year long *mouna* was going on) and called him outside. I did not know which path went where, but I unhesitatingly set out northwards. Finally this body reached the appointed place and stopped. Three times this body perambulated as if it were performing *pradaksinā*, (circumambulation). Then I sat down facing south, and invocations started pouring forth, for at that time, only that kind of speech would emerge. Sitting down, I pressed my hand to the ground. Surprisingly layers of soil started sliding off one by one and my hand and arm began entering the ground without any impediment. When my arm was buried upto the shoulder in this way, Bholanath caught hold of me and pulled my arm out. Along with it some warm reddish water began oozing out."

Also, Ma had taken out some object with her hand. Seeing that Ma's arm was getting buried in the ground, Bholanath became very frightened. He saw the object in Ma's hand, and not knowing what would happen again to her, he took it from her hand and flung it into the Siddheshwari pond. Ma then told Bholanath, "Put your hand in." When Bholanath did not agree, Ma said, "There is nothing to fear. It is necessary for you to insert your hand. Put your hand in." Thereupon Bholanath also inserted his hand. Bholanath said, "The spot seemed very hollow and felt warm." As Bholanath pulled out his hand, warm red water again welled forth.

Ma continued, "I and Bholanath stood and watched the water oozing and flowing out. We covered the mouth of the hole with mud and came away. Unusually enough Baul who had kept awake every day, had fallen asleep at that time. We had gone out passing close by his body, but he did not hear our foot-steps. After we returned, Baul woke up and was very sad when he realised that he had missed witnessing this strange incident. He desired to offer food to the deity and went to arrange for it. I and Bholanath went again to that spot and put our hands in. Later we went one evening to Siddheshwari from Shahbagh and I cooked the meal at night. At that time your Didima and Baul's wife were also present. After eating we all went to Shahbagh. Near the above mentioned particular spot was a dome-like mound. You all saw it later on. Look, when we went to that place for the first time, Baul was asleep, no one from any side saw us going. When we returned, the Bhairavi saw us."

On the eighth day also an offering was made—Ma went out. The next day was Sankranti of the month of Bhadrapad (August-September). Later, one day, Ma was lying down at Shahbagh. Baul was told to get a few things. He procured them and kept them in that pit as per Ma's instructions. Ma had told Baul to keep that spot clean and to go and look at it every day. Baul did so. He had planted a *tulasi* and some other flowering saplings there. As soon as Prangopal heard this he gave Baul ten rupees towards the protection of the place. From that money, the place was surrounded for a distance of about ten arm lengths (5 yards square) with a light bamboo fence according to Ma's instructions, and an altar (*vedi*) of bricks was constructed over the hole. It measured one and a quarter *varga** (about 21" square). Later, Ma used to go and sit in that place sometimes and kirtan was performed. Once Prangopal was taken there and kirtan continued throughout the whole night. Prangopal had said that that was the first time in his life he had spent an entire night singing kirtan. He was very methodical in his diet and routine. During that kirtan Ma was lying down on her *āsana*. Baul and others saw that Ma's body was not present, only her clothes were lying there. Another thing that happened was, that when the dome-like mound was demolished while Father was having a room built there, the labourers experienced an extraordinary fear in breaking the mound. Then Bholanath went and broke it when Ma told him to do so. The mud from this dome-like mound was

* The unit of measurement in rituals is the arm of the *Yajman*, that is, the man who is performing the ritual. The *vedi* was one and a quarter arm square.

mixed with the mud of the image for the *Vāsanti Pūja*. The significance of this dome-like mound has not yet been revealed by Ma. But Ma disclosed that Bholanath had performed spiritual practices at that spot at some time in the past. He had worshipped the Goddess Durga and had immersed the image in the pond of this Kali temple. In this way various spiritual aspirants came to this spot every five thousand, five hundred and five years.

Here is another matter worthy of attention. Bholanath while at Bajipur had once expressed a desire to build a house next to a pond, and to perform *Vāsanti Pūja*. Ma immediately said, "You have a house already, Gokul Thakur's house in Dacca is your house." We heard afterwards that the Gokul Thakur mentioned by Ma was the original owner of Ramna Ashram. Later, Bholanath did the *Vāsanti Pūja* at Siddheshwari. Bholanath himself had been a spiritual aspirant in ancient times at the particular spot at Siddheshwari. It seems as if Ma took Bholanath to the two above mentioned places only for his sake. He had been at both these places before.

Another incident occurred. Every day Pramatha Nath used to send some fish and betel leaves to Ma's house. When he was transferred, his son who was in Dacca told his servant that every time fish was brought into the house, some of it should be sent to Ma first. One day the head of a small fish was sent to Ma's house. Ma did the cooking herself. When Bholanath sat down for his meal and cracked the head of the fish, fresh blood was visible inside the head. Drops of blood trickled down

unto the plate. All were amazed to see this, for how could fresh blood remain inside the head of a fish which was well cooked? Ma did not let him eat it. Pratul heard of this as soon as he arrived. He asked Ma the reason for this again and again. Ma was compelled to say: "It happened because may be a feeling of unwillingness was present in the mind of someone when this fish was being sent here." Pratul went home and questioned his servants and cooks severly. They confessed that while the fish head was being sent to Ma's residence they felt that the head ought to be preserved for Pratul. But fearing that Pratul may get annoyed later, they sent it to Ma's house. Then Pratul went to Ma and pleaded with her, "Since this offering caused this kind of an upset, I shall send all the ingredients for an offering to be made on the coming *Amāvasyā* (new moon) day. You must all eat, please."

Pratul also had great faith and devotion for Ma. On his and Bholanath's requests, Ma agreed to have rice on *Amāvasyā*. Pratul sent food as offering on the *Amāvasyā* day and Ma had a proper meal. The next day she ate only nine grains of cooked rice. There was no arrangement for milk and fruit. The next *Amāvasyā*, Father requested her and made an offering to her and Ma ate that day also.

After that, Father offered food to Ma on every *Amāvasyā* day and Ma also ate as per her rule. In this manner *bhoga* was offered to Ma on every *Amāvasyā* day.

Offering to Ma on every New Moon and Full Moon

When Ma's nephew, Amulya, first procured a job, he offered *pāris* and sweets to Ma on *Pūrnimā* (full moon) day. Ma ate on that day also. From then onwards Amulya started offering food every full moon

day. Later, everyone got together and made this offering on *Amāvasyā* and *Pūrnimā* days. On these two days Ma, Bholanath and all devotees normally only ate some fruit in the day. Kirtan was performed at night and food was offered to Ma and everyone got *prasada*. Very often we partook of *prasada* in the small hours of the morning, because Ma went into *samādhi* during the kirtan and it was very late in the night before she came back to the normal state. Then by the time so many people finished their meals, the night was spent. In those days, many of Ma's devotees did not eat anything on *Amāvasyā* and *Pūrnimā* day—in the night food was offered at Ramna Ashram and they obtained *prasada* there. Special worship was performed at the temple on new moon and full moon nights.

I have observed several times that if anyone coveted the food that was to be offered to Ma, it could not be offered. If the object to be offered is coveted it can never be offered One day Ma was seated in our Tikatuli house to receive an offering of food. A very big fish had been cooked. Some of it was put into Ma's mouth, but Ma was just not able to swallow it. Finally it was discovered that the servants had caused some confusion. One day, someone brought some very good food, but Ma did not eat any of it. She distributed all of it. And then another day she ate some very simple preparation with such relish that the person who brought it felt greatly satisfied. So we were extremely cautious when we cooked for Ma. For some days Ma was unable to eat a fruit if it had been pecked by a bird. Ma would not know of it – we used to cut it and give it to her but she could not eat it. Later she

would disclose the reason. We would examine the fruit and find that it had really been pecked by a bird. For some days this kind of thing would persist, then it would wear off. So much so that whatever was offered to her, she would eat it without discrimination. Not only that, she would even eat up food that another person had started eating. One day she saw a dog eating something and ran saying, "I shall eat with it."

CHAPTER II

In the year 1926 the following incident occurred one day. Not many people had as yet begun coming to Ma: just a few of us had gone to Shahbagh. Food was being offered and kirtan performed on a new moon night.

Wonderful state during kirtan and food offering on Amāvasyā day — the consequences of offering flowers at Ma's feet

Sitanath and some others were doing the kirtan. Matari Pisima had prepared the vegetarian food offering; the non-vegetarian food offering had been cooked by Ma and I had helped. There was a little more cooking to be done, but Ma left me and went and sat for the kirtan. Since there were only a few people, kirtan was held in the middle room where Ma used to sleep. Ma would go and sit in the corner room where Matari Pisima and others used to sleep. If any lady were present she would also sit in that room. At night time not many ladies would be present, sometimes a couple of ladies would turn up. That day no lady had come. Ma sat alone in the corner room, where food was to be offered. All the cooked items had been kept there. Almost always Ma would enter the middle room in the midst of the kirtan when she went into *bhāva*. Sometimes she roamed around the whole house, sometimes she rolled about, sometimes she stood with the weight of her body balanced on her big toes. At that time how many *kriyas* manifested in her body! Sometimes she rested her weight only on her ankles and walked about, and danced in *bhāva*. Sometimes she sat steadily or lay down. Earlier she would touch the sugar puffs

meant for *prasada*, throw them on the ground once and lie down. After a few days she was unable to do even this. She would tell Bholanath to offer the puffs himself and then distribute the *prasāda*. Finally, she would sometimes get up with a little effort. At other times Ma could not be roused throughout the whole day. Father and I would keep sitting near Ma till two or three o'clock in the morning. Bholanath would make various attempts to wake her. On some days we would sing *ndma-kirtana* and when Ma recovered slightly, we would make her sleep and come away.

On that day, Ma went and sat in the corner room while *kirtan* was going on. After completing the remaining cooking, I also went near the *kirtan*. Ma had got engrossed in *bhāva* and had gone into the *kirtan* room. I used to bring a garland and some flowers for Ma every day. That day also I had brought it. I would put the garland round Ma's neck and place the flowers in her hand when she was seated quietly before the *kirtan* started. Today, Ma had entered the room in the beginning itself and I could not garland her. Therefore I felt disturbed.

From the start, I used to stay near Ma even amidst a crowd of men while she was in *bhāva*, in order to protect her body. I never felt shy. But that day Ma had gone into the *kirtan* room and I was feeling hesitant to enter the room alone in the midst of the *kirtan*, so I could not go. I stood in the corner room in the dark and looked at Ma. I could not garland Ma and so started confiding my sorrow to Ma mentally. I saw Ma roaming about and then, as on every other day, she threw the sugar puffs all round and lay down. I thought Ma would

not get up soon. I knew how many attempts had to be made to rouse her. But how strange it was, on that day Ma stood up gradually. This had never happened before, so I felt surprised and started watching her. I saw that Ma stood up swaying, and was coming towards the corner room towards me. I am unable to explain the state of my mind at that moment, I do not know what happened in my heart. In a moment Ma came swaying and fell into my lap. I also embraced her tightly. There was no one else in the room, it was dark. I had not the slightest doubt that Ma had got up and come into the room in this way, only because she knew my desire. At that time I experienced such an ardour that I became oblivious of any restrictions, and in the darkness I garlanded Ma and scattered the flowers on her feet, thinking that no one else could see this anyway. But as soon as I had offered the flowers at her feet, Ma stiffened suddenly and slipped off my lap unto the floor and lay there stretched out. A strange sound emanated from within her and her eyes rolled upwards. Her face turned red, her hands and feet seemed to be getting twisted. Bholanath noticing Ma's condition dashed into the room. The few people who were present in the *kirtan* came and stood at the door holding lights. The many-hued flowers on Ma's feet and clothes showed up vividly in the light of the lamps. Everyone realised that I had offered flowers at Ma's feet and therefore Ma's condition had become like this. Ma's indistinct speech also became slightly clearer by degrees. She uttered, "She has offered flowers, I am going." Saying this she started acting so strangely that we became terribly frightened. Bholanath started whispering, "Don't go. It was

improper to do it, when it was forbidden." I heard that also. Seeing Ma's condition, I have no words to describe my own condition. I became paralysed like a block of wood, I had no strength even to move my fingers. Shame, sorrow and fear threw me into such a plight that I was longing for the earth to tear apart and swallow me up. How was I to face all the people again? What would Father say? Everyone knows that Ma is slightly more gracious towards me, but what had I done today, what would people think? I had neglected Ma's instructions. I did not have the strength then to think of all this. I was sitting with my head bowed down on the edge of the chouki, near Ma's feet. Bholanath was trying to pacify Ma. Everyone kept quiet. All were afraid of what Ma might do next. Suddenly Ma sat up in her dishevelled state. Her eyes were still not calm. As soon as she rose, she said to me, "Get up." I got up like a mechanical toy. She then said (she was sitting with both her feet joined together), "Place both your feet on my two feet and stand properly." Several people were standing in the doorway, how was I to stand facing them? But where was the time to think of all this? I obeyed that command also like a mechanical toy. Ma then started scattering the same flowers at my feet, reciting I do not know what mantras. After doing this for awhile, Ma calmed down. She told me to get down, folded her feet and sat properly. Then suddenly she stared fixedly at me and said, "From today, do not allow anyone to touch your feet and prostrate before you. Not even your younger brothers and sisters." Later, for some reason, she also told me, "With the exception of 2 or 3 persons do not prostrate before anyone by touching their feet."

I sat in the corner again. Seeing Ma serene, I gave vent to my feelings and cried bitterly. Why did Ma come to me herself, make me garland her and offer flowers and then put me to shame in this manner in front of everybody? At that time my fear was gone, because Ma had become steady. Ma laughed and said to Bholanath, "Just see why she is crying!" Bholanath said, "She is bound to cry after what you have done. Now console her!" At that time it was still not very long since we had started coming to Ma. Ma asked that the door be closed and truly pacified me that day. After this incident I got permission from Ma to offer flowers at her feet on every *amavasyā* (new moon) day and so I worshipped her on every *amavasyā* day. One day I said, "Ma, I do not know how to perform *pūjā*." Ma replied, "In whichever way you do it you will be performing real worship." I would offer flowers with devotion at Ma's feet in the best possible way. From the day that I started this practice, Ma forbade me to offer flowers at the feet of any other deity. Since then, I do not offer flowers anywhere other than at these feet.

Then Ma said, "Come, we shall serve *prasāda*." I said I would not be able to serve. After the scene that had occurred I felt ashamed to go near all the others. They must certainly be very angry with me.

Ma said immediately, "Alright, I will ask everybody what anger do you have towards her?" I saw that Ma would again cause some great trouble. So I was compelled to agree to serve with Ma according to her request. After serving everybody we sat down to eat.

I hated eating meat, and therefore Ma never used to give me meat even when it was *prasada*. One day, before we sat down to eat, Ma said, "Today Khukuni will give me to eat. And when she is not present, you will feed me." For a few days Bholanath fed her. Sometimes she would bend her head downwards and eat with her own hands. She could eat a little bit from her hand. But from that day, eating with her own hands stopped once and for all. Ma does not do anything of her own will.

A few days earlier she had been to Rajendra Kusbari's house for a food offering. At that time, when putting rice into her mouth, she felt that her hand was not going towards her mouth but was bending downwards. Ma

realised then that her eating with her own hands was coming to a stop. Now that this great task had fallen to my lot, I felt deeply gratified. Some time ago Ma had fed me during the first food offering at our Tikatuli house and had said, "When I cannot feed myself you will feed me." Now I realised the meaning of that statement. Ma knew everything and therefore these words had come from her lips. After the meal, Ma and Bholanath went to sleep and we prostrated before them and returned home. From then onwards I used to feed Ma whenever I was present, nine or three grains of rice or as many as she would eat. At that time I would not be there when Ma ate during day-time, but I fed her every night. I would go away after Ma went to sleep. It was invariably about one thirty or two or even later in the night when I returned home.

Cessation of eating with her own hands — the tasks of feeding falls to me.

We heard of one more incident that had occurred during the previous Deepavali, in November 1925, when Ma performed Kali Puja in Shahbagh at everybody's request. No one had ever seen Ma worshipping in the usual way with flowers and *bela* leaves. Her *dikṣā* had also not taken place in the usual way, it had happened of itself in a wonderful way.

Ma sat down to perform the worship. A fat goat was brought for sacrificing. Ma took the goat on her lap and cried for a long time and then left it. The goat straightened up and walked to the spot of the sacrifice all by itself. Ma fell prostrate on her face, lay down flat and screamed thrice in exactly the same pitiful way as a goat

screams before being sacrificed. After a long time it was seen that not a drop of blood was shed when the goat was sacrificed. A little blood had to be squeezed out, since blood is necessary for the worship, but Bholanath was unable to get even a single drop of blood though he pressed hard with his fingers.

Ma went through many kinds of states during *bhava*. Often it happened that Ma would be walking or talking but her mind was actually far away. Though she performed chores with her hands very correctly, yet most of the time she was absent-minded. Though standing still it seemed she had gone away somewhere. Seeing Ma in such a state, Bholanath's brother-

in-law Kaliprasanna Kushari used to say, "Look, you go away somewhere while you are talking; can you tell me where? It is evident that you were not here, what kind of a condition is it,

Ma's condition in *bhava*.

do tell us?" Ma would smile slightly and say, "Can we make those who have never tasted sugar understand the sweetness of sugar?" Ma never talked very much then, she used to be absorbed in *bhava*. Sometimes a very lively mood prevailed and then she spoke a lot. But the moment we kept quiet Ma would become tongue-tied. We had to keep Ma's speech going by making her speak all the time. Ma would also laugh and say, "It is a machine, what else? As much as you all work it, it works, then it stops." Most of the time she remained lying down. Sometimes as she sat up to eat, she would roll on to her plate, and become absolutely motionless. She had to be reminded even to go to the toilet. Then she would go there and sit firmly, probably forgetting why she had come. I would be near her often, keeping a watch on her condition, so that if she did not return for a long time, I would go inside. I would see that she was sitting firmly. On shaking her and calling out to her she would start and get up smiling, saying, "I completely forgot." Then I would raise her and bring her back. I was always sort of afraid about her body. Day by day this condition grew. How much could Bholanath alone keep watch on her? Therefore I started spending most of the time there.

Sometimes she would say, "See, I cannot differentiate properly between fire and water. If you people can look after this body it will remain, otherwise it will be destroyed." Truly enough, she fell into water on some days. And sometimes she would suddenly get up and roam all around inside Shahbagh. In between it seemed as if she was talking to someone. If I happened to be near her I could hear her carrying on a conversation with someone.

On some days she would be unwilling to have any food put into her mouth when it was being offered. But on some days she would be so absent-minded, that she would eat whatever I put into her mouth. She would look somewhere else and not say that she would not eat anymore. I also would go on feeding her, having got an opportunity. She would eat up food sufficient for two or three people, still she would not say anything and would go on swallowing what was put into her mouth. Finally, when I stopped feeding her, being afraid to continue, her attention would be drawn back and would stare and say, "What, will you not give me any more? Have you exhausted all the food?" It was as if she were absolutely unaware of whom I had fed and what she had eaten.

One day she was eating while in this condition. I also did not pay attention and fed her with the head of the ilish fish. I thought she would chew it and throw it out. Then I also gave her the head of a rohu fish. I did not notice whether or not she had ejected it, because several times I had seen her discarding it after chewing it properly. I kept feeding her for some time, when suddenly Father looked and said, "Has she thrown the bones away after chewing?" I saw that she had not discarded anything, she had eaten up such terribly thorny bones. Ma also spoke up as if startled. "What do I know? You tell me to eat, so I eat. When I accept, I accept everything. You did not tell me that I have to pick and choose. I do not always understand what has to be thrown away. I do not notice any difference in taste. Everything seems alike - what can I do?" I felt very repentant that I had not paid attention and made her throw out the bones. The thought came

into my mind that we people did not have the capacity and the right to serve Ma. The condition of Ma's body used to be such that we were always afraid as to what kind of state we would find Ma in at Shahbagh each day. Seeing her in a natural state we would feel relieved.

We heard that while at Bajipur Ma once saw the subtle bodies of two Arab *sakirs*. One of them was the teacher and one the disciple. Ma said, "I saw them so clearly that if I knew how to draw I could paint their portraits." One day Ma went to a

Vision of Arab fakirs in Bajipur
place of congregation belonging to Sikhs and seeing the picture of an old person with a white beard, white hair and a serene countenance, she said, "The Arab *sakir*'s face which I had seen was similar in some respects to this one." Afterwards Ma returned to Shahbagh and saw two graves. Ma heard that they were the graves of two Arab *sakirs*, a Guru and his disciple. Ma had also seen those *sakirs* again while roaming about alone in Shahbagh. Ma said, "I never knew where Arabia was or that a country named Arabia existed. But everything was revealed in this manner, from within."

One afternoon the topic of the *āsanas* etc. which had occurred earlier was being discussed. Ma said, "All these *āsanas* etc. which happened were not done of my own volition. So much so that I was unable to hold and do anything with my hands. I saw that this body was bending and performing various *āsanas*. Every day so many varieties of *āsanas* were

Description of earlier spiritual states



Didi Gutupriya



Sri Sri MA Anandamayi at Shahbag—D. ca

performed. One day, a particular *āsana* came about. Later, when the same *āsana* began, I thought I would see how it was happening. I caught on with my hand and adjusted a bit. That caused a pull on my leg and I was hurt. Even now it feels so strange at that spot." Further Ma said, "At that time I never knew what *āsanas* were. Till then I had not been informed externally as to how many kinds of *āsanas* existed, or what the names of the *āsanas* were. But various kinds of *āsanas* formed of themselves. After that I could hear and understand clearly from within as to what was going on. The body, too, was being twisted and turned to perform *āsanas* in such a way that it seemed as if only flesh and no bones were in the body and therefore it was possible to contort it that way. It was turned topsy turvy in a myriad ways. The head would bend backwards and get fixed right in the middle of the back. The hands and feet got bent in such a way that it was stunning to watch." Ma would say, "See, if the hinges of a door are oiled, they can be moved and turned without the slightest force, but if the hinges are rusty then even to turn them slightly is difficult nor can they be turned at all. Similarly if the joints of the body are oiled then it automatically bends in all directions. And if one spends one's life in enjoyment of sense pleasures and then performs *āsanas* sometime, one experiences great difficulty. The arms and legs cannot be set right in any way, it feels as if they were rusty."

Describing the events of her childhood, Ma said, "Once my Mother carried me and took me to listen to *kirtan* — I must have been about three years old at that time. I used to experience just the same kind of state then, while listening to

kirtan, as I do now. But Mother thought that I was drowsing in sleep and so she started shaking me to wake me up. But I could not say anything then. And even if it had been told, who would have understood? It seems the time had not come. Now I can tell you all this."

We were unable to comprehend several phenomena. Ma had complete knowledge from her very advent; but only whatever was necessary at whichever time, only that was revealed gradually at the correct moment, and is still being revealed. Ma speaks of her daughter-in-law stage, when she stayed with her elder brother-in-law after marriage, "See, this body played the role of a girl, then it took on the role of a daughter-in-law, whatever had to be done at each time was done by this body. Now this state has been assumed. After this who knows what will happen? I became the daughter-in-law. My elder brother-in-law never saw my face, but all the service was done by this body. He used to be very fond of me."

One day, in the month of Phalgun, Ma went into *bhāva* during kirtan. The kirtan stopped after awhile and Ma recovered slightly. She was still seated in a

dishevelled condition. During this time, she looked at Bholanath and said, "A room was to be constructed in Siddheshwari at that spot." The matter did not become clear even then -

Father made a devotee ask meanwhile, "What kind of room shall it be?" Ma said, "Alright, it shall be discussed tomorrow." The next day, Father himself asked about the room. Ma sat absorbed in *bhāva* and replied giving

Order to build a room in Siddheshwari given during *sāmādhi*—
February-March (Phalgun) 1926

all the details as to how big, and how high it should be though she was not in a natural state. They were talking about constructing a room above the altar. Ma said, "The enclosure of bamboos which has been erected is not to be removed. The walls have to be raised outside it." She forbade the construction of a permanent structure, saying, "I shall stay only in a room made of mud." She was asked whether the altar was to be covered with mud. In reply to that Ma said, "Let the work be started first. At that time whatever has to happen will happen. Just now nothing more is being revealed." Father requested Bholanath who went and asked Ma, "Sashanka Babu is willing to construct that room. He asks your permission." Ma said, "You construct whatever you can, then whatever has to happen will happen." Father started constructing the room. The land containing the altar was purchased. Ma said, "The room has to be completed within seven days." In between, one day, she also spoke about the altar. She closed her eyes and said, "No mud shall fall on the altar. Walls shall rise on all four sides, that spot shall remain like a pit." The altar was quadrangular. Probably it measured one and a quarter arm length on all four sides.

Within seven days, with great haste, the room was constructed. The first room was made in the Phalgun month of (February-March) 1926. On the seventh day, Ma went into that room and asked everyone to sing kirtan. So everyone went into that room with Ma and Bholanath and performed kirtan which continued throughout the night. Ma returned to Shahbagh in the morning. Ma would go into that room and sit on the altar in the centre of the pit. In that little enclosure

she would fold her legs and even lie down. She spent a lot of time in this manner. Devotees would sit all around. Afterwards Ma would sometimes stay in that room for one or two days, and then again she would just remain for a few moments and come away.

After a few days we heard that Ma had said that Vāsanti Puja was to be performed in that room. Bholanath had had a

very strong desire to perform Vāsanti Puja long ago. Therefore Ma was now about to fulfil his desire. Devotees started preparing for the Puja with great joy. Bholanath's close relatives and friends were informed.

During all this, my younger brother Haridas came to Dacca. He was studying for his B.A. in Calcutta. He had heard that we had become devotees of some Mataji. Recently, by Ma's orders, I had stopped letter writing. He was very sad about this. His own mother had passed away about a year and a half ago and we were now in this state. He came to Dacca and began to express great sorrow on account of our prevailing condition. We did not say anything, because this is not a matter which can be explained. One day, on account of the Vāsanti Puja, Ma herself went to Chittagong and brought Pisima (Kaliprasanna Kushari's wife) who was Bholanath's sister. Pisima's face resembled our mother's quite a lot. Ma came along with her to our Tikatuli house for a visit. Only Ma herself knows why she does what. The moment Haridas heard that Ma had come, he went and sat in another room. He had heard that we did not stay at home much and that we were with this Ma most of the time. Therefore he was not favourably disposed towards Ma.

Performance of
Sri Vāsanti Puja
in the above
mentioned room
—Chaitra, April,
1926

Ma, Bholanath and Pisima were all seated in one room. Father called Haridas and asked him to bow down before Ma. What could he do? So he came and prostrated before Ma. Ma smiled and said to Pisima, "See here, this is Khukuni's younger brother." Pisima is a cheerful and religious lady by nature. As soon as she saw Haridas, she embraced him. Haridas also, seeing a face resembling so much that of his mother sat down close to her without feeling shy. Ma saw this and laughed softly, but did not say anything. After awhile they returned to Shahbagh. Father and I went with them. Haridas stood on the foot-board of the carriage and accompanied us for a little while. Then he went back. It was very late in the night when we got home. On returning we heard that my brother, though he did not say anything about Ma, had been much affected on seeing her. Several ladies who were our relatives stayed in the building. As we entered the house, they said, "Nandu (the name by which Haridas was called) has not gone to sleep as yet. He has been listening to stories about Ma all the time." As soon as we went upstairs, he got up from his bed and came to us. The expression on his face had changed. Haridas is very reserved by nature, but he had changed radically today. He was saying, "This is not an ordinary Mother, I do not know what has happened to me after seeing her. I feel I want to go to her again just now. Tell me all about Ma, I shall listen."

We were talking about offering food (*bhogu*) to Ma the next day at our house. Nandu said, "I shall myself go to bring Ma." Seeing him thus we were overjoyed. We sat and

talked about Ma till it was nearly morning. As soon as the day dawned, Nandu got up, washed his face and hands and went to fetch Ma. After that he began spending most of his time near Ma. He almost stopped studying. He followed Ma wherever she went. The purpose of writing all this is to show that Ma's wonderful power of attraction had been revealed from the very beginning and was operating within each person in a special way. The story of the orphan has already been mentioned. I have seen the transformation in Nandu's attitude and how the opinions of this modern educated youngster changed. Nandu had come unfavourably disposed towards Ma and was very sad that we were going to her regularly, but just one glimpse of Ma changed him completely.

Didimā and Dadamahāśaya arrived. Didimā is a very calm lady. It seems that anger never existed in her. Dadamahāśaya sings a great deal. Everyone loved to hear him sing. Bholanath's elder brother-in-law, Sitaram Kushari arrived with his wife, son, daughter-in-law and little grand-daughter. Great happiness was afloat at Shahbagh. Sri Atal Bihari Bhattacharya, Professor at Rajsahi arrived with his wife. He had come the previous year during the summer holidays to Prangopal's house at Dacca and seen Ma for the first time and worshipped her. Then he had also come during the Durga Puja holidays. This time he brought his wife along. They have no children. He is a very straightforward and religious person, his inner purity glows on his countenance. I heard that he had also offered flowers at Ma's feet one day. He did not eat meat and fish since his childhood. Ma had given away an urn pertaining to a certain vow (*Lakshmi-vrata*) of her

householder life to Atal Dada's wife. Several other relatives and devotees had come. Preparations for the Pūjā were on with great festivity. Under the room built above Ma's altar in Siddheshwari was a big anthill. Even after the house was built, white ants used to make piles of mud inside the room. By Ma's instructions, this mud from the white ants was mixed with that used for making the image of Goddess Vāsanti. We took Ma and Bholanath to the room at Siddheshwari and asked, "What will be the size of the image?" Ma told Bholanath to measure the height of her body with a wicker stick. It was done. The Vāsanti image was made to the measure of Ma's body. Priests arrived from Vikrampur to perform the pūjā. Arrangements were also made for the recitation of the Chandi.

Here preparations went on for the food offering (*bhoga*). Sri Yogesh Bandyopadhyaya stayed in the store house, Mathur was organising people for various jobs. It was decided that on one out of the three days, as per Ma's earlier practice, only green gram dal, rice cooked with potatoes and coconut fry would be offered. All those present during these three days were to be given *prasāda* but whatever was cooked and offered once was to be distributed, nothing was to be cooked again — this was Ma's order. With such a rule who was to estimate the amount of necessary ingredients? Prisima told Ma, "You yourself give out the provisions to be used, since cooking cannot be done more than once and all those present have to be given *prasāda*." And so it was. Both of Bholanath's sisters and Rajendra Kushari's wife and others were to cook the food offering.

On the sixth day of *Navarātri* (*Sāshī*) everyone went to Siddheshwari. By then several new houses had come up there and the jungle had been more or less cleared. Devotees were put up in the houses. Men folk stayed on the veranda of the Kali temple. At that time the veranda of the Kali temple was quite decrepit, later several changes were made. When Ma had stayed for several days in the small room of the temple, the room had had no door facing outside. Now with a door fixed, the room was brighter inside. On *sāshī* day 'adhibāsa' (when the Goddess comes into the dwelling) and other inaugural ceremonies were performed. On the next day (*saptami*) the *Pūjā* was started. Ma bathed in the pond of the Kali temple very early in the morning and went to the storehouse and explained how much of each item was to be cooked. Then she sat in the pit on the altar, facing the image. She did not get up from there the whole night through. She had a little milk before or after the evening. Before the priest started the worship, Bholanath asked Ma, "With which seed mantra shall the *pūjā* be performed?" Ma was silent at first, then she replied, "Let no seed-mantra be uttered; the *pūjā* should be performed fully according to laid down rules. Wherever the seed-mantra has to be uttered, let there be a little silence each time and let the worship be done."

All of Ma's work is unusual. Whatever she said was done. Ma was seated in the pit very near the priest, her face was veiled. Ma's hands are always positioned to form some *mudra* or other — at that time too, it was so. The *pūjā* was completed, the food was offered and everyone got *prasāda*. At night, Ma sometimes kept sitting in that pit, sometimes she would

fold her legs and lie down. The measurement of the pit is about that of a pit used for sacrifice fires (*Yajña kunda*). Ma would lie down in it nicely. If the body does not have the ability to contract, it is totally impossible to lie down in that pit. Especially because Ma's body was then tall and well built. Bholanath lay down in one corner of that room, I also slept near Ma's pit. No one else stayed in that room

The next day again, all the items were to be offered. Mathur Vasu had had everything cleaned by servants in the night and had arrangements made for the food offering. Kirtan was going on in between. The next day was *Mahāstamī*. On this day also the *pūjā* was performed. A slight delay had been caused in bringing the food offering. Ma cried and cried and grew impatient. We just cannot understand this crying and laughing. Sometimes she would become overwrought by weeping and at other times she would laugh and laugh and go into *sāmādhi*. Sometimes her laughter tinkled.

The food offering was brought quickly and offered. Everyone sat down to receive *prasāda*. Whoever came was served. The provisions in the kitchen were nearly exhausted. Big vessels were being emptied and kept outside. Police Sub-Inspector, Chintaharan Samaddar, was putting away all the things in the kitchen. The remaining food was sufficient only for a few of our people. Keeping those items, he put all other vessels outside. Just a little before twilight, a party of women and men came to see the image, but there was not much *prasāda* left. No one remembered the injunction "Cooking must not be performed more than once." Bholanath and others got agitated and ordered that more rice was to be cooked. Imme-

diately four big pots of rice were put on the fire. In a calm mood Ma was sitting in the pit with her face towards the image. I went to Ma and said, "Ma, not much *prasāda* is left. Many people have come." Without turning her face Ma said, "Whatever is left, let it be distributed. We can see about you all later. But no cooking is to be done again." Then we remembered that cooking a second time had been forbidden. As soon as I conveyed this message, Chintaharan Babu went to the vessels he had kept outside and, putting his hand inside, collected whatever little *prasāda* he could. He mixed it with the remaining *prasāda* and the party was seated and fed with all this. Surprisingly all guests ate their fill and yet there was enough left for us. The four pots of rice were taken off the fire, not a morsel was used. The next day all of it was distributed.

On Saptami day a terrible storm raged just after twilight. The hut housing the kitchen blew off, no one knows where. Ma rose and stood up and swayed along with the storm, laughed in great bliss and clapped her hands. The intensity of the storm grew. Bholanath got very upset. He also knew in his heart of hearts, that Ma could do anything she desired. So he said to Ma, "Now what has begun again? Let the image not be harmed." He said this with great agitation. Ma seemed to have been intoxicated with the velocity of the wind. Several people took shelter in the room where the *pūjā* was being performed. The room filled up. We started singing *nama kirtana**. The kirtan gathered momentum along with the intensity of the storm. Father would just fold his hands and,

* Ma used to say 'Hari bol' in between during the kirtan, therefore kirtan was performed singing 'Hari bol' during those days. Later Jyotish

gazing at Ma, call out "Ma — Ma". That day he was doing the same thing. Just then, Ma went out into the stormy rain. Everyone followed Her. Ma roamed around various places and finally entered the Kali temple. She stayed there for a while and then came outside. This time she went out and entered a small room in Rajmohan Babu's house which was close by, and shut the door. Arrangements had been made for ladies to stay in that house.

Bholanath's elder brother's, Revati Babu's wife, her daughter Lavanya, her son-in-law and others had all come in connection with the *Pūjā*. Ma herself had been present in the delivery room when Lavanya was born. She is a very simple girl. As soon as Ma entered the room, Father went towards the *Pūjā* room. He saw that Lavanya was rolling about in the slushy mud near the room. Her entire body was covered with mud. The only sound audible was 'Hari bol'. Father went and lifted her up — she was an image of happiness, unaware of anything, only smiling and repeating 'Hari bol'. Everyone went near her and saw her condition. Bholanath ran and called Ma. Ma washed off the mud and had her clothes changed and asked her to be taken to Rajmohan Babu's house. Ma also went there. The girl was in a wonderful state. She had no consciousness of what was going on outside, she was steeped in the nectar of the Name. Seeing her condition, her mother and her husband got very perplexed. Her mother appealed to Ma, "Remove this mood quickly;

Dada started kirtan with the wording 'Ma, Ma'. Afterwards we heard that Ma had herself sang kirtan with the words 'Ma, Ma' earlier, but Jyotish Dada was unaware of it. He thought, 'Let us sing the name of the Mother' and started this kind of kirtan.

how will her household go on if she is like this?" She was saying to her daughter, "Now I shall never let you come near your Auntie of Dacca. Because you have come here you are in such a state." She was getting very angry. The girl, in her exalted condition was gazing at Ma and saying, "Look, Aunty, am I mad? Why is Mother so upset? What a sweet Name it is. You yourself have taught it to me. What else is there but this name?"

Earlier, when Ma had got up and stood in the pit, the girl had come near Ma and embraced her saying, "What has happened to Aunty?" As soon as she had touched Ma a tremendous change had come over her. Afterwards, when all the people had left the room and gone with Ma, the girl had stumbled and tripped in her trance-like condition and had fallen down. No one had noticed her in the pandemonium of the kirtan. Ma now took the girl and sat with her in a room. I was also present. Ma said to me, "See, the condition which she is in is unattainable even after much spiritual practice. But what can I do?" Her mother and others do not understand. What can I do? Saying this she began performing certain *krityas* on the girl's body. The girl was coming into her natural state for a few moments and then again relapsing into an ecstatic condition. Ma said, "See, just as when you pour water on one side of a big conflagration, it flares up on the other side, so also it is happening here." Gradually the girl recovered a bit. But for about three days she remained in that transcendental state.

On *navami* day, rice cooked with potatoes, green gram dal and coconut fry were offered. The girl went and sat near the

place of worship and staring at the image, she said to me, laughing softly, "Didi, see, the face of the image looks exactly like Aunty's face." Ma had told me, "Stay close to Lavanya constantly and stop her if she raises any topic concerning such conditions." Bhofanath, on being requested by his sister-in-law and her son-in-law, had prayed to Ma, "Please see that this condition of Lavanya is not permanent." Therefore Ma said, "What is it to me? Her relatives are asking for this condition to be removed. Let it be so. Whatever has to happen will happen." In answer to the girl's statement I said, "Does Aunty have ten hands? What is all this you are saying?" The girl said, "I am speaking the truth. Can everyone see the ten hands? She is hiding her ten hands and revealing only two so as to remain amongst humans." Saying this she kept looking again and again at the image and at Ma. The girl had not even seen Ma after Ma had been in such a condition. To day she was saying all this in her exalted state.

The *Navami Puja* was performed according to precept. On *Dasami* day the image was immersed in a pond close to the Siddheshwari temple. Everybody stayed on at Siddheshwari for several days even after the *Puja*. Ma's brother Makhan's (Yadunath Bhattacharya) thread ceremony was performed there. One more thing happened. On *Ashtami Puja* day, Pisimā, Kaliprasanna Kushari's wife, worshipped Ma's feet with one hundred and eight hibiscus flowers and one hundred and eight lotuses. Ma kept sitting in the pit, while Pisimā sat above her and worshipped her. Pisimā felt that day that her sister-in-law was a goddess and therefore she was able to

worship her in this manner. On the night of *Dagami* day, Pisimā fed Ma with rice. After several days all returned to Shahbagh.

One day kirtan was going on at Shahbagh. Relatives and friends were then still there. The aged Sitanath Kushari was also participating in the kirtan. Ma was in *bhāva* and was rolling on the ground. Suddenly Ma's hand chanced to touch this old gentleman's feet. This same gentleman had brought Bholanath after marriage. He was a very God-fearing man and devoutly believed that Ma was the Divine Mother (Devi). After the Kirtan Sitanath Kushari said, "I will not eat unless I touch Ma's feet. Ma's hand touched my foot." He was Bholanath's eldest sister's husband. In any case Ma never let anyone touch her feet and then to allow this elderly gentleman to touch her feet — she just would not agree. But he began saying, "I brought you after your wedding but today you are not Ramani's (i.e. Bholanath's) wife, in my eyes. I know you are Devi. I shall not accept water to drink without taking the dust off your feet." Ma was compelled to let him touch her feet. At that moment all those present also touched Ma's feet and felt blessed.

All the relatives departed. Sitanath Kushari's only son was Mangal Dada. The children borne by Mangal Dada's wife did not survive. Just as one child grew up a little and the second one was conceived, the first child would die. Two children had died in this way. At that time, she came with a girl in her arms. The girl was about two years old.

Mangal Dada's wife was expecting again, so she was weeping, for she feared that this girl might also die. Finally all the people got together and after discussing placed the little girl at Ma's feet. Her name is Maroni.

Maroni is granted shelter Since then Maroni stays near Ma. Matari Pisimā started bringing her up. Bholanath is very fond of her. Whenever Ma goes out anywhere she goes along with her sometimes, otherwise she stays with Matari Pisimā.

Having listened to so much kirtan, she also sings *nāma-kirtana* beautifully. Ma did not let Maroni go back to her father's house. Perchance the baby born to Maroni's mother after her, died. Later two more children were born who are alive.

Everybody left. Day by day bliss was overflowing at Shahbagh and various kinds of states began manifesting in Ma.

About Jyotish Dada and Niranjan Babu Many people came to have Ma's darshan. Kirtan was being performed at other houses as well. Ma would go there and often went into *samādhi*. All the people had darshan of this.

Jyotish Dada had seen Ma once and then had not come again for about a year. He had written a book. Later one day, he sent a man to read out the book to Ma. Ma said, "Let the person who has written the book come himself." On receiving this invitation, Jyotish Dada came again. This time Ma spoke to him at length. He saw that Ma's personification as a daughter-in-law was receding and her motherly personality was blossoming. After this he came often. He never stayed much in the crowd but he constantly kept in touch with news about

Ma. He remained so absorbed in thoughts of Ma that sometimes he could see vividly even the details of the dress worn by Ma, while sitting in his own house. He often came alone to Ma and spent a great deal of time with her. He was a person who was a special recipient of Ma's Grace. He could also understand Ma's various moods in a special way.

Niranjan Babu was a close friend of Jyotish Dada. They both hailed from Chittagong. Ma had been taken to Niranjan Babu's house and kirtan had been performed. Kirtan was also performed several times at the Tikatuli house. Ma would go and spend the night there sometimes and return in the morning. Ma hardly ever slept at night. When we stayed near Ma, we also found ourselves in the same condition and kept awake whole nights in Ma's company. Various kinds of rules about Ma's diet came into force. After a few days Ma said, "Whoever feeds me, has to live on fruit only at night." So it was. Ever since, I eat cooked food only once a day.

Chintaharan Babu's wife had had a particular dream, because of which she was going to receive initiation (*dikṣā*). So she took Bholanath and Ma with her. Until that time Bholanath had never given initiation to anybody and Ma never gives initiation at all. We do not know how this initiation

Bholanath's indisposition
was performed. One person's affairs are not disclosed to any other person. Bholanath returned from that house with terrible stomach trouble and pain in the bowels. Ma cleaned the stools and performed all kinds of other service. On the second night, Ma fed him with a little cucumber. After that he recovered gradually.

Ma would sit and talk of her earlier life every day. One day during conversation Ma said to Didimā, "Mother, did not so and so come to see me on the thirteenth day after my birth?" Didimā probably did not remember the incident but later, when she heard Ma mention it, she recalled it. From several such instances it seems as if Ma always

About Ma's birth and childhood
possessed complete knowledge and was fully conscious. From childhood she went into *samādhi*. Kirtan would be going on far away,

Ma would be sleeping in her house. She said, "This body would be in *bhāva*, but as it was dark in the room, neither Father, Mother nor anyone else could see. And I also felt that no one should notice it. That is why it appears that all this remained secret."

I heard from others about Ma's advent. Dādāmātā's mother went to the famous Kali temple at Kasava to pray that Bipin may get a boy, but she found herself praying that Bipin should get a girl. Some time after the old lady's prayer, the advent of Ma's body occurred. Ma was very cheerful from childhood. Her power of attraction, which is manifest to such a great degree today, made everyone love her even at that time. Though Ma was born in a poor man's house she did not have any particular difficulty because of the love of her parents. Long after Ma's birth, two more sisters and a brother were born. The elder of the two sisters died when she was about seventeen years old. I have heard about her from Ma. She died calling out to Ma, "Didi, Didi". } The incident from her life which I heard about had something very special in it.

I heard of one more event. A few days before we met Ma for the first time, Pisimā had come to Shahbagh. She saw that Ma was not eating anything. She had the desire to offer *khir* (rice cooked in milk with sugar) to Ma one day. She requested Bholanath, for Ma obeys as far as possible whatever Bholanath asks for. Bholanath knew that whatever Ma does is for the

best. He also knew that Ma does not do anything of her own will, so he did not press Ma too much against her regulations. That Pisimā's offering of rice pudding (*khir*)

day, on being asked by Pisimā, he requested Ma to eat. Ma said, "Whatever happens at that time is alright." Rice pudding was made of twenty seers of milk. A few other persons had also been invited and had eaten a little. After the *khir* was offered to God, Ma said to Pisimā, "Will you not give me any *khir*?" Pisimā put some *khir* into a vessel and fed Ma. Ma ate it and expressed a desire to eat more. So Pisimā brought some more. Gradually, in this manner Ma ate up all the *khir* and still asked for more. Shahbagh is rather far away from the city. So it took some time to send a man and procure milk again. As soon as the milk arrived it was put on the fire to prepare *khir*. Ma's weeping because of the delay was a sight to be seen. The rice was not properly cooked, the *khir* was poured as it was on Ma's dish and Ma ate it just like that. Ma had eaten *khir* of nearly twenty seers of milk. Seeing this, Pisimā got frightened. She is a very devout person. She thought that this was not the normal manner of eating for humans. She then covered the vessel and recited some incantation and put a little *khir* on Ma's head. After that Ma was unable to eat anything more, her whole

body became strangely affected. We saw the burn mark on the cloth covering Ma's head, where the *khir* had been put.

I have never seen Ma doing *pranāma* in any temple or anywhere else. I have heard from her that she has ceased to do *prāṇāma* altogether for the last sixteen years.

Cessation of doing *prāṇāma*

In this context she said, that in January-February of the year 1915, on the auspicious

wedding night of Ma's sisters Surabala and Hemangini, Didimā and Dādāmaśāi took their daughters and sons-in-law to the temple of Dhakeshwari to perform a *pūjā*. Ma was also present. Ma went into the temple and sat steadily in the lotus pose, facing the image of Dhakeshwari. In that posture, first a tearful mood and then a laughing mood was manifested. After that two or three kinds of postures of prostrations, namely *Saṣṭāṅga*, *Panchāṅga pranāma* etc. came about of their own accord. From the last posture, Ma was unable to raise herself for a few moments. After a while she got up slowly and came home. On the way she told everybody, "Do not reveal all this to anyone." Bholanath and Ma's maternal uncle's son Nishi Babu were also with her. Nishi Babu is a scholar. Seeing Ma prostrate in this manner he was astounded and asked, "From whom have you learnt all this?" Ma replied, "I have not learnt from anyone. It happens of its own accord." Ma stopped prostrating from that day in Bajitpur. At first Ma was just not able to bow down. Later I have seen that on certain rare occasions, Ma did do *pranāma* to Bholanath, Dādāmaśāya and Didi. Bholanath also

used to prostrate before Ma. What their attitude was they alone knew. In connection with this topic of *prapāna*, Ma spoke of another event. While Bholanath was living at Bajitpur, he, Dādāmahaśaya, Dīdimā and Ma, all went together to the Kali temple at Kasava. There Ma prostrated and walked around the deity (*pradakṣiṇa*) in front of everybody. But right after that an extraordinary expression appeared on Ma's face and eyes. Describing the event Ma said, "Do you know how it was? It was as if I were one with the God I was prostrating to, and with that there was an extraordinary change in this body."

Further Ma said, "I was given some work in the puja-room as a child. Mother would say, 'Be careful so as not to touch the Deity.' But the surprising thing was that I invariably touched the deity somehow or other. I do not do anything of my own will, especially when Mother had forbidden it, but what could I do? It just used to happen. The next moment the thought would arise—I do not do anything of my own will. And yet another surprising thing was that coming out of the room I had no kheyāla to tell all this to anybody." I said, "Why would you remember? Your body does nothing that is unnecessary. If you had told, probably the image would have had to be bathed again, but that was not needed."

The regulations in Ma's diet changed day by day. She would eat normally for a few days, then for six months she would not put any food into her mouth. She would say to us, "Do not put any food into my mouth, if you do, it will be harmful to you." Six months later while Bholanath sat down to eat, she

Various regula-
tions in diet

sat down too and said to Matari Pisimā, "Bring all the rice." All the rice that had been cooked was brought. That day there was not much of vegetable. Ma said, "Pluck some *gāndāl pātā* (a creeper with curative leaves) and bring them." They were brought. She ate up rice enough to feed seven or eight persons, along with the leaves. That day she swallowed whatever she was given. After that a new regulation was started again for a few days. She said, "I shall eat only whatever fruits have fallen from the trees in the garden. Do not give me anything else." There were not many fruit-trees in the garden. Mango trees and lichi trees were plentiful, but it was not the season for their fruit. So the gist of the matter was that Ma ate nothing. Then she said to me for a few days, "Whatever you can feed me in one breath is my meal for a whole day and a whole night." She would not even sip water, so that I had to make her drink water also in one breath. But Ma was not content with that either. Finally she said, "Just as *durvā* grass is plucked with two or three fingers, similarly, in one breath, feed me only what you can pick up with two or three fingers." The substance of the matter was that not to eat at all was the objective. In this way the days passed. In any case she just did not eat ordinary food, neither would she let us arrange for milk and fruit. If some arrangement was made she would upset it.

Once Jyotish Dada, on learning that Ma was not eating anything, told Matari Pisimā that he would send *ghū* (clarified butter) and *maida* (flour) and that she should make two or three *pūris* (a food preparation made of flour) and make Ma eat them

every day. Matari Pisiñā put away the *maidā* and *ghī*. Jyotish Dada's man would bring the *maidā* and *ghī*, hiding it from Ma. If Ma were to see it, she would distribute it to everybody and finish it in one day. For a few days Ma accepted this service. Finally one day she said, "Make *pūris* of all the *maidā* and *ghī* that is in the house." She also sent for Jyotish Dada. When he arrived she said to him, "Let me see how many *pūris* you can feed me with." Ma ate up all the *pūris* (sixty or seventy) which had been made. Laughing, she said, "Had there been more, I would have eaten them all. But if I eat like this, for how many days can you feed me?" She began to laugh and added, "If I start eating properly every day, then not one of you will have enough money for that. This is why I say, stop sending *ghī* and *maidā* from today. It will not do to arrange for my food in this manner." After that day, she did not eat *pūris* again for very, very long.

I have observed several times, during a period when she was eating nothing, someone would come along and request her to eat. Ma would gravely sit down to eat. She had the same absent-minded mood. I was feeding her but she was not satisfied. She said, "You are not quick enough. Call one more person." Two people were feeding her, yet it seemed as if they were unable to satisfy her. She kept on swallowing. She was seated solemnly, eating. Seeing this condition, the person who had asked her to eat became frightened himself and finally we had to stop feeding her. Immediately Ma would say, "Why, will you not give me more? You say 'eat' and when I start eating you do not give me enough. Tell me, what shall I do?"

Bholanath also made her eat several times and was frightened when he saw this condition and stopped feeding her. That is the reason why he never pressed her much in this matter. We have also noted that when Ma eats enormous quantities of her own *kheyāla*, nothing happens. But when someone else presses her to eat, she eats alright, but within a short time she becomes so unwell that the person who feeds her feels abashed and never again has the courage to request her to eat. A few days later the indisposition clears up of itself, but everyone is left wondering.

One day, Ma said, "Put one or two grains of rice into my mouth as soon as it is cooked." But by chance that day, no meal was cooked at all. At night she went to Siddheshwari and was to eat there. No arrangements were available for eating there either. No one was enthusiastic about making arrangements, because the schedule of Ma's movements was never known earlier — so it was not possible to make preparations. At night in Siddheshwari she said, "Today no rice was put into my mouth." Immediately she asked someone to get a couple of rice grains, light a stub of hemp, cook the grains and put them into her mouth. I did this one day in Siddheshwari. In this way she would observe her regulations in an extraordinary manner. No regulations guaranteed that Ma would sit down to eat every day. She would be lying down, and since no one would eat before taking *prasāda*, I would touch some food to her mouth and bring it. And that was all her diet. The mood of remaining lying down was prevalent most of the time. Speech also ceased often.

Regulations
in speech

She sometimes suddenly took a vow of silence. At that time we felt very sad. At first she spoke a few words to Bholanath while maintaining silence, finally she did not do even that. Neither did she make any signs. Her face and eyes remained expressionless. Later she would describe her three years long silence, "Just a couple of words about any work were spoken very softly to Bholanath alone. Other than that no speech emanated at all."

While Ma was in that condition, Bholanath's youngest brother Yamini went to Bajitpur once. He was then quite young. When he saw Ma so silent he felt greatly upset. His mother was not alive and now his sister-in-law would not speak. One day he said very sadly, "Baunch (sister-in-law) will you not speak even to me?" Ma says in this context, "I do not do anything of my own will. A little after he said this, an enclosure was drawn by my finger all around where I sat. After that it seemed as if something was pushed from within and began coming out. A little later incantations and invocations started pouring forth, just as they do now, after which I was able to speak to him. Such a thing did not happen at any fixed time. May be I had gone to the pond to do some work when such an enclosure was formed and I could speak. Then speech would stop by itself again and I would rub out the enclosure and get up. In this way, the various conditions that came to pass are without number."

I saw that whoever came and spoke in whichever way to Ma, she immediately comprehended his intentions. If the topic of spiritual practices of some highly advanced state arose,

Ma was able to explain it in ordinary day-to-day language. It was as if no state was unknown to her. When I asked, "Ma, what was the use of sitting all alone in a room in Bajitpur and going through all those states? No one could see — what was the use?" Ma said, "You people needed it. It was necessary for it all to happen in secrecy and therefore it happened thus. Whichever spiritual practices need to be done in solitude, they will occur in solitude alone. And see, whenever you people ask about anything the reply is given immediately that such activities have occurred in this body and that they happen in such and such a way. Because of this it makes it so much easier for you all to understand in a proper manner." Hearing this statement from Ma, we thought, "It is true enough. It all seems so clear from so many aspects when we hear that all this has happened in Ma's body." I had read in Chaitanya Deva's life history, "He taught religion (dharma) by practising it himself." Ma says, "See, this is why everything is necessary." I have seen Ma pass through so many adverse situations, but I have never seen her getting bewildered or dispirited. In every situation, she remains steady, patient and calm, always in bliss. Even those who are not particularly devoted to Ma have agreed that they never see Ma in a disturbed or unhappy condition.

CHAPTER III

Meanwhile, Prangopal wrote to Ma requesting her to go to Deoghar. He was living on his pension near his Guru at Deoghar. His family was staying there in a rented house, while Prangopal stayed at his Guru's ashram. His Guru, Swami Balanandaji, is a great person (*Mahāpurush*). After persistent requests from Prangopal

Ma's trip to
Vaidyanath
Dham—
Vaishakh, (May)
1926)

Ma took us along and left for Deoghar in the Vaishakh or Jeth month (summer) 1926. Bholanath, Father, Atul Dada and his wife, Nandu and I went with Ma. Ma had never been to Calcutta before. We all stayed at Pramatha Nath's house. He was living at Calcutta with his family at that time. We remained there for one or two days only and then left for Deoghar, where we stayed at Prangopal's residence. Prangopal's wife lives in the house with their small children. What a beautiful family it is! In the afternoon, Prangopal took Ma to his Guru's ashram. We also went along. From the disciples we heard that the Swamiji was a hundred years old. He is famous as a realised soul (*stiddha purusha*). It is a very large Ashram. It has two temples and several brahmacharis. Swamiji lives in a temple called *Dhyāna Mandir*, a little distance away. Prangopal took Ma to the *dhyāna mandir* to meet Swamiji, who was very happy to see her. In the course of conversation he said, "Ma, once you had given me darshan in a subtle form. Today you have come to give me darshan in your material form."

Ma went to the ashram every morning and evening. One day Ma was speaking to the Swamiji. She said, "There is nothing except the One." Swamiji said, "There are two. He and His *Māyā*." Ma would not admit duality in any way. After a long discussion, Swamiji accepted Ma's statement. Ma began to laugh. Swamiji made Ma sit near him and fed her with *luchi*s. The next day he made Ma have lunch at the ashram. He gave Ma a *rudrākṣa* necklace and a red sari. During kirtan there, Ma went into *samādhi* often. She stood on her big toes and danced for a long time in her exalted mood. Swamiji watched Ma's condition enthralled. Ma kept her hand on Swamiji's head during *bhāva*. Then, in the same condition, she went to the *dhyāna mandir*, holding Swamiji's hand. There they conversed in solitude. A few days later, Swamiji went to the place of his spiritual practice (*Tapovana*) and stayed there for a few days as per Ma's instructions. About the above mentioned condition she experienced in Deoghar, Ma said, "It was as if I were somewhere, watching this kind of play going on in this body." We stayed there for about seven days.

Girija Shankar Bhattacharya, Professor at Rajsahi College, saw Ma there and went with her to Calcutta. One day he spoke to Ma about something and wept a great deal. He was crying like a child with his head bent down. Ma got up and came away. She started walking about here and there, without ever glancing at the gentleman who was weeping. We all said, "What shall we say to you? This gentleman is crying disconsolately and you do not pay any attention — you are not even going in that direction." Ma said

laughingly, "What am I to do? I cannot do anything by my own will. Sometimes my *kheyāla* is not drawn even to someone crying out a hundred times, and sometimes even when nothing is said I go and sit near the person. Whatever is done by this body happens of itself. I cannot do anything by my own choice." I have observed this kind of attitude at many other times.

One day in Deoghar, at Prangopal's house, Ma went into such a state that we all gave up hope for her life. That day, it was not during kirtan, but just while she was sitting that her whole body turned black. Father felt her pulse and got alarmed. We could only perform *nāma-kirtana*. Bholanath also did a lot of *nāma-kirtana* for that was our only succour. Ma has said several times, "If the *kheyāla* to return into the body is not present when the body is in that state, the whole game may be over, therefore it is only your intense yearning which makes me return." Ma was sleeping at night, when she suddenly in a very indistinct voice asked for the doors and windows to be closed. I understood her words with great difficulty and shut the doors and windows. She had told us earlier, "If such a state occurs, then keep your hand on any part of my body and repeat the name of God mentally." I did just that. I kept my hand on her feet and repeated the name of God. I have spent many nights in this way. About this condition Ma has said, "Because you all sit and do *japa*, the *kheyāla* to return into the body is roused." She also said, "Probably it is necessary to return, therefore I am able to instruct you thus." She would also tell Bholanath quite often all that was to be done in such a situation. He would make

every effort, but sometimes we were confronted with such a condition that nothing would help in any way. We would all keep alert and recite *japa*. On some days, after eating some food, she would be resting, when the rate of breathing became terribly fast and together with it the body became indescribably strange. Ma has never become unconscious in any of these various types of conditions — Ma has said so herself and we have also witnessed this. The body used to become motionless because of the unnatural rate of breathing. I would rub her body, but even though I rubbed very hard, Ma would not feel it at all. Finally Bholanath himself and some other young devotees would rub her hands and feet with all their might. Then Ma would say that she could feel some sensation. And the ones who were rubbing would become drenched in sweat. This condition persisted for months together.

Finally, when after the festival at the new ashram at Ramna, Ma set out to travel to many places along with Father, she sat in a field and said, "I had been asking Bholanath for permission to go out like this since so many days, but he did not agree, therefore I did not go. But what happens to my body in this manner is only because of this." We have seen many times that if Bholanath raised an objection in any matter, Ma would refrain from it, but her body would become such that everyone became frightened. Because of this Bholanath would usually not create obstacles in any situation. If Bholanath became too angry for any reason, then again Ma's body reacted similarly. All signs of death would appear. In this way, Bholanath's anger had gradually decreased considerably. He had been seeing all

the states from the beginning — he had to endure a great deal in order to protect Ma's body, there is no doubt about this.

We returned from Deoghar and came to Surendra Mohan Mukhopadhyaya's house at Calcutta. He had not seen Ma before. At first he served Ma as a guest.

In Calcutta during our return
One night, sitting on the terrace, he conversed with Ma the whole night through, about what

I do not know. After that he began addressing Ma as 'Ma' and started looking upon Ma with devotion and faith. His old mother also saw in Ma her *Isha Devata* (Chosen Deity). After that the entire family became deeply devoted to Ma. Whenever Ma went to Calcutta she always stayed in the house of Surendra Mohan Mukhopadhyaya. Kirtan performed along with devotees was mostly held at that house. Ma spent most of her time there. His old mother loved Ma like her own child, though she revered her as her Chosen Deity. She used to be crazy about Ma. In Calcutta, Prangopal's sister persistently pleaded with Ma and took Ma to her house (*Siva Nivāsa*). I cannot describe how much affection she showed. We were very happy with the characters of Prangopal and all his relatives and friends. We do not come across many such families. They are all simple, humble, soft spoken and religious. Returning from *Siva Nivāsa* we went to Pramatha Nath's house in Calcutta. A number of people came to see Ma there. Several friends and relatives, known to Pramatha Nath, came for Ma's darshan. Revati Sen (a disciple of Gosaiji), a celibate throughout his life, Navataru Halder and several

others had their first glimpse of Ma in Pramatha Nath's house. Now they are the recipients of Ma's abundant grace.

On the day that we were to leave Calcutta for Dacca, Father had a carriage brought and all the luggage was loaded on to it. But Pramatha Nath just did not allow Ma to go. He did not say much, but he went to one corner of a room and sat in meditation. When Ma went to take leave of him, he fell at her feet. Ma could not move, so she stood still. The departure time for the train passed by. It started raining heavily. On receiving permission from Ma to sing kirtan, everyone stood in the rain and sang. Ma also kept standing in the downpour. Kirtan went on for very long. It was very late at night. Everyone had brought some eatables to be offered to Ma for her journey. All this was distributed as *prasāda*. Everyone was drenched. Many people had offered clothing to Ma. It was distributed and everyone changed their dress, bowed down to Ma and left.

The next day we started for Dacca together with Ma. Atal Dada took leave of us at Calcutta itself. At first when Atal

Return to Dacca
Dada arrived, Ma pointed to me and said to him, "See, she is your sister, your faces resemble to a great extent." She went on in the same strain and said many other things.

Ma was at Shahbagh. Sometimes she went to Siddheshwari. One night all the people accompanied her. Earlier the rule **The incident at Siddheshwari** had been made that even if kirtan could not be performed every day, it was definitely to be sung on Mondays and Thursdays. On these two

days of the week everyone would gather and perform kirtan at length. On other days a little kirtan was sung casually. Since large crowds began to gather, the authorities of the garden stopped everyone from entering as they were afraid the gardens would be spoilt. At that time Ma gave orders that kirtan should be held in a different house each time and that on Mondays and Thursdays it was to be held at Siddheshwari.

It may have been a Monday or a Thursday when Ma went to Siddheshwari. The road was still very bad then. Everybody had to put up with a great deal of trouble to get there. Or rather, Ma herself attracted everyone there in spite of the hardships. Ma went to Siddheshwari and sat in the pit. Bholanath sat above. All the devotees had assembled. Jyotish Dada never stayed much amidst crowds, but that day he too was present. Sometimes the devotees created a pandemonium regarding certain issues. The subject of which house Ma had visited and which house she had not, was taken up and dissatisfaction was expressed. Ma was then veiling herself much less — she would talk a lot, sitting amidst her children. That day her countenance was even more radiant than usual. No shyness or hesitancy hampered her speech. She looked at everyone sweetly and said, "Having come here, all of you must try and forget your differences and animosities. What is the benefit of coming here if you want to indulge in hatred and fault finding? And I go wherever and whenever I am taken. At first I used to walk about and go wherever possible, now I do not know how this body behaves day by day. I cannot always go walking. You all can take this body wherever you like in

a carriage. There is no question of feeling sad in this respect."

Then she said a little firmly, "I do not know what mood is coming on today. I am your daughter, yet you all call me 'Ma'. If that is really what you believe, then wherever I stay at any time, know that that house is mine for that time and therefore convince yourself that it belongs to you all." A little later she again said — at that time her shyness as a daughter-in-law had totally disappeared, she was speaking in a firm voice. "Whosoever comes here has to remain prepared. Nothing has been done so far, only the foundation has been laid in the ground, that is all. Much has to be endured and many storms will arise, those who have to be swept away by that typhoon will go, and those who are meant to stay will remain." Having said this firmly, Ma became silent. Ma spoke laughingly alright, yet her firm tone piqued all present. Everyone sat quietly. A little later other conversations started, kirtan also went on for a while. Everyone questions Ma about the ups and downs of their worldly life and that day also they did this. The ladies were asking questions. Ma said, "See, everyone asks me only about worldly matters, I do not say much in that connection. But I am telling you today, that when I come and sit here, whosoever asks whatever question I shall answer. At other times I will not. But I cannot say when I shall be coming here." Hearing this, the ladies wanted to know about very trivial worldly matters, Ma also answered each question laughingly. Strangely enough no one asked anything sensible. Almost none of the males put questions. I was in such a state having obtained Ma that I felt nothing

was worth asking. Only a few ladies voiced their problems. Everyone got put off with such ordinary questions and started kirtan again.

Ma laughingly said to me, "Can you come and sit in this pit?" I also replied fearlessly, "Oh surely, if you command, I can." Ma took some flowers from the ground and began throwing them on me. Laughingly she said, "I am performing worship. This girl is very obstinate." I lay flat on the ground and prostrated. No distinction between mine and yours remains in Ma's proximity, Ma worships everyone and then worships even her own feet. It is all her divine sport. After a while the kirtan gained tempo, Ma got up and stood inside the pit. That day all kinds of wonderful moods began expressing themselves. Every moment it was changing. Most people were singing kirtan, many understood slightly and were standing with folded hands. That day I also became overwhelmed and started reciting loudly invocations to the Goddess (Devi). I was on my knees next to Ma's pit, with my palms joined and my eyes shut. I did not see when Ma's hand suddenly touched mine. I was startled, opened my eyes and saw Ma laughing and holding on to my hand and pulling me. Ma's hand was very cold, as if it were made of ice. A little later, Ma went out with her hair in disarray and in a dishevelled condition. It was a dark night, she started walking very fast. Ma sometimes walks so fast naturally that no one is able to keep pace with her. I almost ran and kept alongside Ma who entered the Kali temple. Presuming that Ma would go with everyone to the temple, it had been kept open that day. As soon as she entered she circumambulated around the image of

Kali and lay down flat in front of the door. I and Bholanath were rubbing her body. The rest of the people were standing at the door. After a long time, Ma said in indistinct language and with a very soft voice, "Tell everyone that whatever they have seen today, is not to be spoken about." With great difficulty I understood the meaning of this statement and told everyone. It was very late, Ma was raised and brought into the room where her *asana* was kept. The night was nearly over. Many people took leave. Bholanath roused Ma with great difficulty -- her body seemed to be weary. Some more time passed, then Ma got up and started walking with such speed that no one could keep pace with her. She went straight to Shahbagh and lay down.

In this way she was enacting some kind of divine sport every day. One afternoon I came from Tikatuli to Shahbagh and saw that Ma was not in. After searching a Removal of order
banning entry of
people into the
garden
good deal I found her sitting on top of a branch of a small tree and laughing. Later she got down.

Ladies from the Rai Bahadur's house came often. The Rai Bahadur was very devoted to Ma. He had forbidden everyone to enter the gardens, but within a few days he withdrew the regulation and was very ashamed about the ban, when he faced Ma.

One evening kirtan was being performed in Ma's bedroom. Ma was in *bhāva*. Suddenly she became eager to take the dust off Father's feet. Father moved back saying, 'Ma, Ma'. Finally she was going near everyone's feet. Thinking she may

touch their feet, everyone started moving backwards. Ma was becoming restless and crying like a little baby. She said :

One day's incident — attempt to touch everyone's feet
"If you do not give me the dust of your feet I shall not remain." Finally Bholanath went and spoke a great deal and pacified her. He said, "Who will give you the dust of his feet ?

You can take the dust of your own feet." Then Ma took the dust of her own feet and became calm. I was standing in a nearby room, thinking, "When Ma is saying that she will not remain without taking the dust of someone's feet, then whatever is destined will occur. If Ma is to come near me I shall not stop her; whatever Ma does is for the best." But as Ma advanced towards me she stopped, she did not come. That day several other ladies were also present. Ma became calm and sat amongst the ladies. Ma said, "Today, no one gave me the dust of their feet. If someone had done so, then I too would have given the dust of my feet to all." I said, "Ma, you did not come near everyone. Those who would not have stopped you were also present here." Ma laughed and said, "I knew that, that is why I could not go near them." She was sporting in this manner.

The number of people who came to Ma for medicines and blessings to cure illnesses was limitless. But Ma keeps very

silent in this connection. Sometimes one or two incidents have occurred but that is another matter. One or two patients have recovered.

Removing illnesses
When Ma was taken near some person stricken with some disease, Ma stroked her hand over the body, as if she were

sweeping and he recovered. Ma would say, "It is not as if I did so of my own will, the hand rose by itself and such an act was performed. But sometimes even after hundreds of pleas, my hand will not move."

One day in Shahbagh Atul Datta's wife (sister of Vibhu Thakurta) came and urgently requested Ma to go to her house. Ma was moving about here and there and not paying any attention to what was being said. Finally the woman went to Bholanath and pleaded that her son was very ill and that she was anxious to take Ma once to show him to her. Bholanath used to get very moved by other people's sorrows. He requested Ma to go. Ma went into the room and told Bholanath, "What is the 'use of going ? That boy will not survive " Jyotish Dada was also present there at the time. He said, "Then it is better not to go. If Ma goes, her name will be tainted needlessly. It will be proper to tell some relative of theirs what Ma has said."

His is a devotee's heart. All this was said thinking that someone may feel later, that it had been Ma's mistake. But nothing was done, for it is not proper to reveal such a thing earlier. Ma and Bholanath went to that house. The boy was studying for his M.A. or doing law, I do not recollect clearly. He was suffering from something similar to tuberculosis. Ma saw him and came away. At several instances, Ma has not wanted to go to such places, but at Bholanath's special insistence she would go and say, "It is good after all, it seems as if it is necessary, that is why I have to go. For me, living and dying are the same. May be it is necessary to go near the one who is dying." Saying this, she would not

offer any resistance to going after that. But she had told Bholanath and particularly all of us, "Never request me to make someone well. Can you ask me to make someone sick? If everyone were to be saved then there would be no death at all. Is this possible? Everyone is reaping the fruit of his own actions and will continue to do so. It is not right to obstruct this. If anything is forced the results will be contrary." After Ma had seen the boy, Atul Babu's wife came to Ma and pleaded with her, "Ma, please be gracious enough to do something." Ma said, "Even if you are told to follow a regulation, you will not be able to do so." She replied, "Ma, do tell me! I shall certainly obey." Then Ma told her, "For so many days (probably for eighteen days) do not let the boy leave his bed." The lady received this instruction and left. The boy started getting better gradually. Suddenly one day, his condition again became worse. The boy's mother came and stood before Ma at Shahbagh. As soon as she arrived Ma asked her, "Why did you let him leave his bed? He got up from bed on Monday." The woman said, "No Ma, this never happened."

The boy died a few days later. Leaving the corpse at home, Atul Babu's wife came running to Shahbagh. A little before this Ma had been sitting up when, suddenly she lay down with her face downwards. Within half an hour the boy's mother turned up like a mad person. She believed that the regulation had not been broken. She felt that since Ma's instruction had been observed the boy should not have died. She seemed to be raving mad. A little later, all the people held her and took her away. From then onwards she lost all

faith in Ma, believing that in spite of obeying Ma's regulation her son had died. A few days later, because of some incident, she recollected clearly that Ma was right and that within those specified days, the boy, feeling better, had left his bed and come to the veranda and talked. She immediately went to Ma at the Ashram, telling her that she was repentant and began to weep. Ma consoled her, saying, "See, whatever has to happen, will surely happen. I had said that this boy would not survive. I had told you also that even if I were to tell you the regulation you would not be able to conform to it. Because of this I maintain, it is of no use to press me to do something; if anything has to happen, it occurs of its own accord." Ma spoke a lot in this strain and consoled her. She comes to Ma whenever possible and has intense faith in her. Since then Bholanath also does not request Ma pressingly. And when someone has to recover, Ma goes of her own accord and performs some action by which the patient gets well.

One day Ma was having her midday meal at our Tikatuli house. Gurubandhu Bhattacharya lived nearby. His wife

used to come to Ma. Their son was down b) The story of with *kālā-azar*. The mother desperately cried Gurubandhu's near Ma and pleaded with her. Bholanath son told her to take Ma's *prasāda* with her.

Accordingly she took the *prasāda* and fed it to her son. A few days later the boy recovered. One day she offered food to Ma at her own house. But after some time her attitude changed, she stopped coming to Ma. We mentioned this to Ma. Ma said, "All are good. If anyone were to even defame me, you

should not take offence. People come here as long as they are destined to give and take. Nobody is at fault. And criticism from others is to be accepted as an ornament. After taking to this path one has to consider blame an embellishment. Just as an iron bangle is worn by a woman whose husband is alive as a sign of her good luck, so keep in mind that criticism is of great help on this path. On the spiritual path, criticism is a sure phenomenon. That is why I say, you should not fear criticism neither should you take offence when it is pronounced." Ma says this, but can we follow it?

Another incident occurred. A relative of ours came with her sick son to our Tikatuli house. The boy was in a pitiable condition due to *kalā azar*. They had heard about Ma. Father had said to them, "Two kinds of therapies are going on in my house — if you want a doctor's treatment, I can arrange for it and if you have faith, you can leave it to Ma. If your son has to be saved, he will be saved by that alone." After deliberating for a couple of days, they decided to feed him on Ma's *prasāda*.

Ma had come to the Tikatuli house to receive a food offering. She had finished her meal. Our relative went and asked for *prasāda* for her son, but Ma remained silent. Bholanath got up. As Ma got up she suddenly gave a morsel of rice to the boy's mother. Having obtained *prasāda* in this manner, they fed it to their son with great reverence. Surprisingly enough the boy recovered gradually. After several years, when the same boy was ill again, his mother came to Dacca, but Ma was not there then. They stayed at our house. The boy's

c) The story of a boy suffering from *kalā azar*

treatment was started. His mother was very poor. A few days later Ma came to Dacca. We told Ma in Shahbagh about the boy. Ma at once said, "Send him home. That boy will not survive. If he is saved, then understand it to be God's special Grace." We said, "He is poor and is being treated here. What will he do going to the village?" After a few days of treatment, he became quite healthy. We thought that by God's special Grace he had been saved. But suddenly one day he returned from school and had vomiting and loose motions. At about 9 o'clock the next day he died. Ma was not at Dacca at the time.

Then again, another incident occurred. A person suffering from tuberculosis was brought from their village to Shahbagh by his relatives who had heard Ma's name.

d) The story of the tuberculosis patient

The relatives prayed to Ma that they would not leave Shahbagh until the patient was cured.

There were two circular rooms next to the dance hall. Ma was then sleeping in one of them. The other room was given to them to stay in. A few days later kirtan was going on in the dance hall and Ma was immersed in *bhāva*. Thinking that her clothes would not stay in order in this condition, I would tie the end of her sari very tightly around her waist. Her sari slipped off her head; her eyes and face radiated such a beautiful glow, it is impossible to describe it in words. So long as this state persisted, the sari also remained thus. Ma's body was performing various actions during the kirtan. After some time, in the same mood, beautiful invocations were uttered which were in a language incomprehensible to ordinary folk. Then Ma sat in a steady mood and said,

"Bring him (meaning the patient) here." The patient was accompanied by five or seven men. They lifted him and brought him to the kirtan hall. The kirtan had been stopped. Ma said a little anxiously, "Tell him to roll about here." But strangely enough the patient was unable to lie down himself, nor could the people with him make him lie down. No one knows why everybody stood as if glued to the spot. Ma repeated it twice or thrice. The patient tried to lie down himself, but was unable to do so. Ma became silent. Later, Ma said, "See, though it was said, it could not be done. All could have got together and made him lie down, but it did not happen. Whatever has to happen will happen." Then Ma told them to return home. They started, the patient died on the way.

One day, a special incident occurred during kirtan. A gentleman named Yogesh Chandra Rai used to come to Shahbagh sometimes with Nripendra Chandra Ghosh of Tikatuli. He worked at Dacca and was unmarried. He used to sing beautiful songs about the Divine Mother. He did not join much in the kirtan at Shahbagh, but would sit quietly in a corner. He used to sing Shyama Sangeet (songs on Kali) and other songs in solitude for very long. One day kirtan was going on and Ma was in a very exalted mood. She was roaming about the entire dance hall, sometimes looking terrifying, sometimes looking peaceful and blissful various *kriyās* and *āsanas* were going on. As Ma was moving about she suddenly climbed on to Yogesh Rai's shoulders and stood there. He kept sitting quietly in his

natural way. A little later, Ma got down and went in another direction. Everyone started marveling at Yogesh Rai's good fortune. He was asked how he had felt when Ma got up and stood on his shoulders. He replied, "It felt as if a little girl were standing on my shoulders." Till then Ma had not removed her veil fully — she remained veiled while speaking. A few days later we heard that Yogesh Rai had become a sādhu and gone out somewhere. I went and told Ma. Ma said, "He has gone, he will come again." I did not understand anything. A year later, Yogesh Dada returned. Then we heard the whole story: One day he had come to Shahbagh. At that time Ma did not speak much to unknown men. Via Bholanath Ma gave him the command, "Go and wander to various places for one year without taking any money with you. Before leaving see your mother. Shave your beard and moustache and then do not shave for the whole year. Come and meet me when the year is over. Take leave and arrange to have your monthly salary deposited here." He left after receiving these instructions. He did as Ma had told him and after one year came again and presented himself at Ma's feet. That day we saw it was not the same Yogesh. He now had a long beard and long hair. Ma told him to take a photograph in his present condition and then shave off his beard and cut his hair and return to his job. She said, "For the present this much is enough, later we shall see what comes to pass." She had told him, "If in this one year you happen to meet me, do not come near me." Later after he had left his job and had become a *brahmachārī*, Yogeshda became the priest at the Annapūrṇā temple at Ramna Ashram.

Almost every day kirtan was held at Shahbagh. Sometimes a batch of kirtan singers would arrive and sing ballads (pañ) Ma was performing new kinds of līlās every day. One day, before having her meal, Ma said, "Khukumi, dress me in a sari, will you?" Saying this, she stood with her hands folded and started smiling gently. Bholanath said, "Why, have you also stopped putting on clothes with your own hands?" Ma said, "No, I am telling her to do it just today." I do not know how to drape a sari nicely as ladies do, so I thought Ma was teasing me about it. I deliberated a great deal and then dressed her, but I saw that I had put it on the wrong side. Ma laughed and said, "I shall keep wearing this on the wrong side today." Father said, "Neither does she know how to feed you nor does she know how to dress you, but you arrange for everything to be done by her." Ma said softly, "I accept service from the person who does not care about herself." She said this so quietly that probably no one heard it except myself. I was standing near Ma and therefore I could hear it. I think she said it only for me to hear. Ma used to say on several occasions, "If you all live pure and holy lives, I shall remain healthy, your purity will nurture me. External food is of no consequence." We felt surprised on hearing this. We thought 'Everyone's purity alone can sustain my body,' who is this who can say such a thing?

Jitendra Mukhopadhyaya came from Varanasi to see Ma. With amazement he watched Ma's *bhāva* during kirtan. Some days later — probably during the Durga Puja holidays —

Sri Virendra Mukhopadhyaya came for Ma's darshan. He already knew Ma's history from Father. He was also enthralled on seeing Ma. He used to go to Shahbagh every day and stay near Ma for very long hours.

Ma would keep lying down most of the time during the day. As soon as it was night she would get up without a trace of sleep. Often Ma hardly slept at night. If we happened to be present, she would spend the night talking to us and roaming about as she pleased. Even if no one was present she would spend the night walking about or sitting up. She would speak very clearly at night. Virendra Dada, Atal Dada and others used to question her on very profound matters. Ma would make them understand the answers in very simple and straightforward language and they would feel greatly satisfied with her replies. But sometimes there would be no such conversation, because all those who had come mentally prepared with questions, would forget them on coming near Ma. It was convenient to talk during the nights, Ma explained everything particularly clearly at that time. Jitendra Dada went and asked Ma any number of questions at night, thinking he may forget them otherwise. Ma explained it all thoroughly in her own natural way. Virendra Dada, Atal Dada and a few of us would sit with Ma at night. Ma would sit in a particular posture (*asana*) and speak beautifully, all listened fascinated. One day Virendra Dada said, "Alright, Ma, what do you feel when you see new people coming to you every day?" Ma replied

The gathering
of devotees
Various kinds of
questions and
their discussion

immediately, laughing, "Nobody is new. Everyone seems very familiar." And another day Ma was asked, "Does all that is happening in everyone's mind appear before you all the time?" Ma said, "No, not all the time. Yet wherever my gaze falls at any moment, I can see clearly immediately. Just as 'a, b, c' letters are known to you all, but do they always appear before you? But whenever you think of any of them, they immediately appear in your mind. You can understand it to be just that way. This also is said from a particular point of view. Seeing everything all the time and yet behaving as if one did not see, is possible. It depends on *kheyda*."

Then again a discussion arose on—"What is the difference between an Incarnation and a spiritual aspirant? How should an ordinary person distinguish?" Ma remained lying calmly for awhile. She would sometimes lie down when she became silent after talking or else she kept sitting quietly. Sometimes Ma's speech would not emerge. That day too she kept lying down for a while and then sat up. She said, "If they do not reveal their identity themselves, then an ordinary person has no way of recognising them." Again, after a short interval, she said, "Those who are spiritual aspirants bind themselves by one or many regulations and rules, but the one who is an Incarnation, is not governed by any rules. Though everything is done by him, yet he is not bound by anything. He can be recognised if one watches attentively. However, it is indeed difficult for the ordinary person to recognise." A little later, in connection with some conversation Ma spoke about her own state, "So much is going on within this body, but

nothing lasts for many days; Some of it goes on only for a very short time. Just as when you have already studied a book, it is sufficient if you just flip the pages over once before an examination.

The time for Durga Puja arrived. Father was to worship Ma on all three days at Shahbagh. On saptami day (the first day of the main Durga Puja) we went to Shahbagh in the morning and found that Ma had closed the door of her room. Bholanath said, "She will not come out during the day and has forbidden everyone to enter the room. She has said she will come out after twilight." Realising that we would not meet Ma for the whole day, we were terribly disappointed.

Durga Puja in 1926
But what was the solution? Bholanath had permission to enter the room and so took all the items necessary for the worship into the room and performed her *puja*. After dusk, Ma opened the door. Everyone went and sat near her. We asked Ma, "What is this rule you have made?" Ma said, "I do not do anything, I see that for some days the face of the sun is not to be seen." Saying this she began to laugh. Some of us kept sitting near Ma the whole night through. As soon as it was morning, Ma covered her eyes. She said to Bholanath, "Tell these people, (meaning ourselves) to go outside. I am not able to see" With heavy hearts we came away. What an awful regulation this was! Wondering how long it would be in force, we got upset. But what was to be done? On *saptami*, *ashrami* and *navami* on all three days of Durga Puja Ma remained just like that. Bholanath went every

day into the room and worshipped Ma. Everyone was served food at night. On the *dasami* day, a little after sunrise, Ma slipped out quietly, hiding from everyone, and went and jumped into the pond. On getting the information we all ran there and found Ma swimming about very happily. Seeing this, Father, Bholanath and many others got into the pond. The *Dasami* bath (ritual bathing on the day of the culmination of the Puja) was thus performed. Bholanath asked Ma repeatedly to come out, because one never knew what she might do next. Ma sat immersed upto the chest in a yogic posture and just would not move. Bholanath tried to raise her forcibly but he could not lift her. Ma had gone into *blava*. She spread out both her arms and wanted to jump into the water, saying "The Mother of Water is calling me". She could not be raised in spite of all attempts. Finally everyone got together and lifted Ma out of the pond. Her clothes were changed.

Within this time while Ma was in the water, Virendra Dada turned up from his house, and got down into the pond. Ma and all of us had come out, he was standing in the water and doing his evening worship (*sandhyā sandanā*). Suddenly he saw a fearsome image and began trembling with fright but he did not stop performing his worship. After completing the *sandhyā sandanā* he came to prostrate before Ma. Ma was then seated in the dance hall (in those days kirtan was held there). As soon as Virendra Dada prostrated before Ma, she said, "What Baba, did you get frightened?" Virendra Dada was amazed.



MA Anandamayee Ashram at Ramna—Dacca



Swami Akhandananda

CHAPTER IV

The history of
Kali Puja (1926)

Soon it was Kali Puja time. Everyone was requesting Ma to perform the Kali Puja this year also, but Ma would not agree. Ma had told Bholanath, "Please do not press me henceforth to do all these jobs I am not able to do any work at all."

Since Ma would not agree everybody kept quiet. One day Ma was going for the food offering to Tikatuli house. When the carriage approached the pond next to the Governor's house, Ma saw a live image of Kali as if she were ready to jump into Ma's lap. A garland of red flowers was dangling from Kali's neck but Mahadeva's body was not present under Her feet. Ma did not say anything then (later, we heard this from Ma). Ma went into the Tikatuli house and sat down to have her meal, suddenly she raised her hand and became absent-minded* (Later Ma said she had seen the same image). That day, seeing Ma raise her hand, Bholanath and all of us kept staring at Ma. After a little while, Ma lowered her hand. She said nothing at all. In the carriage also, it seems she had raised her hand.

Some days later, Ma was cooking in the kitchen at Sribagh. Meanwhile, in the circular room which was Ma's

* We have observed whenever Ma had these different kinds of *bhavas* she would say something or, her instinctively sometimes she would keep her down. In the case of the night she would shout loudly yet we did not understand anything. Sometimes we could hear the words but did not understand the meaning. We also saw so many things happen with her body which are beyond the ken of ordinary people.

bedroom, Bhudev Babu was asking Bholanath about Ma's performing the Kali Puja. Bholanath said that Ma was not willing to perform the Puja. After this conversation everyone gathered for kirtan in the evening. They were all under the impression that Kali Puja was not to be performed. Later in the night we returned home. Ma and Bholanath went to sleep. At that time Ma asked Bholanath, "Did Bhudev Babu come and say something?" The place where Ma was cooking was very far from the bedroom. Ma had neither seen Bhudev Babu, nor did she hear from anyone that he had come! Bholanath said, "Bhudev Babu came and requested repeatedly that Kali Puja should be performed." Ma said, "Look, why don't you perform Kali Puja?" When Ma said this, Bholanath felt that she would do the Kali Puja after all. He immediately informed the people outside that Ma would perform Kali Puja. Bholanath was conversing with Baul Babe and Surendra Babu, who were then at Shahbagh, when Ma went into *samaddhi* as she was lying on her bed.

Only one day was left for Kali Puja and it was necessary to go and get the image of Kali that very night. The question arose as to the size of the image. Bholanath went to ask Ma, but she was lying motionless and was not able to speak. Bholanath roused her with much effort, but Ma kept silent. Finally it occurred to Bholanath to muse over why Ma had raised her arm at Tikatuli twice that day. He made Ma sit up, raised her arm and measured it. He found that every time the height was that of two and a quarter arms' length. He felt that that was to be the height of the image. So that very measurement was given. Later, when Ma told Bholanath and

all others about this incident, she said, "What Bholanath understood was correct. I had raised my arm and shown how big the image was to be." When they went to the market to procure the image, they found that the sculptor had got only one statue ready, which no one had bought till then. The devotees measured it and saw that it was exactly two and a quarter arms' length. Everyone was amazed! That very image was brought. Seeing the colour of the image Ma said, "I had seen exactly this colour."

All preparations were made for the Kali Puja. Virendra Dada, Surendra Chandra Mukhopadhyaya's mother, Ashu and his mother, all came from Calcutta that same day. Excellent arrangements were also made for kirtan. Several of us were making preparations for the worship. The evening drew on. Ma was seated in a composed, patient mood. Bholanath took Ma to the pond, where Ma had a bath and put on new clothes. She threw the jumper which was on her body into the pond. Several times I have seen her throw saris and jumpers into the pond. Many times in the evening hours we had observed Ma sitting absolutely still like a statue, without batting her eyelids. That day it was an even more unusual condition. She came from the pond somehow or other, and went and sat in the *puja* room. All the items and accessories were ready. Bholanath was telling Ma to perform the puja. The room was overcrowded with people, without an inch of vacant space. The kirtan room was also similarly packed. Ma sat on the ground and started the puja. She began worshipping with her left hand. After performing the puja for a little while, she suddenly got up, and looking at Bholanath, said, "I shall sit,

you do the puja ?" She laughed loudly, and in a trice swept through the crowd and sat leaning against the image of Kali. At first Bholanath and we had thought that Ma would sit a little away. When she was telling Bholanath to do the puja, he replied, "I had said right in the beginning that I will not be able to do the puja." But before the sentence was completed, seeing Ma's condition, everyone was wonderstruck. In a moment the cloth on Ma's body slipped down. Her tongue protruded. Father started calling out loudly, "Ma, Ma" Bholanath, seated on the *asana* for worship, was offering flowers with both hands. In a moment's time, the tongue went in and Ma lay down with her face to the ground. All this happened in a very short time, before anyone could understand or say anything. A lawyer named Vrindavan was present in the puja room. When Ma traversed the room he was close by. He felt a wave of heat and fell down unconscious. Here, Ma was lying on her face, saying, "Everybody shut your eyes." Everyone closed their eyes. Ma, still lying, said, "Mahadaiya has her eyes open." Mahadaiya was the wife of a gardener. She was standing outside the room at a little distance, under a tree. Who knows how Ma was watching? On being told, Mahadaiya also closed her eyes. After a long time, on Bholanath's command, everyone opened their eyes and saw that Ma was sitting near the image of Kali. What a divine, blissful countenance, glorious like the Queen of all goddesses! Her entire body was covered with flowers. Bholanath was worshipping Ma with flowers and *bel* leaves. A little later the puja was finished.

The sacrificial fire of the Kali Puja

It was time to start the sacrificial fire. Ma spoke softly, in very indistinct language; "The sacrificial fire (*havana*) is unnecessary in today's *pujā*." Then she said,

"Since arrangements, have been made let it be done." The sacrificial fire was lit. Virendra Dada said to Bholanath, "Today we all want

to offer flowers at Ma's feet." Bholanath gave permission, and so that day several people offered flowers. After a long time, Bholanath and Ma sat down to eat. Seeing Ma in all those wonderful states, we decided that henceforth we would always view Ma in that light. But what could be done? Again when Ma conversed normally, laughing and joking, everyone forgot all that at once.

After Ma had finished her meal, all received *prasāda*. Most of the people prostrated before her and took leave. Only a few of us remained. On *Amavasya* and *Purnima* days, when a food offering was made to Ma, I always stayed on at Shahbagh. Father, Virendra Dada, Atal Dada, Nandu, Kamalakanta and others were sitting near Ma. Bholanath was resting. All at once Ma said to me, "Bring some of the fire from the sacrificial fire in a vessel." I brought it. Ma tossed and turned around the vessel with the fire in it, and said, "Do you see? I shall kindle a *Mahayajña* (great sacrificial fire) with the fire of this *yajña*."

Then she said, "Alright, who can sit in Kali's room with this fire?" Virendra Dada spoke up, "No Ma, I shall not be able to do it. I still have a sense of duty towards my family." Yet Ma persisted, "Who can sit?" Father, it seems, had been drowsing. He woke up and I do not know if he understood

the implications of Ma's question properly. He said, "I can sit. What is there to fear?" He had heard the topic of whether one would be afraid to keep sitting in the Kali temple being discussed before this, after which he had dozed off for awhile. As soon as Ma heard his statement, she said, "It is quite alright. Ask your children." The children said, "Very well. If Father can do it, it will indeed be good." That very moment, Ma handed the vessel with the fire to Father and asked him to go and sit in Kali's room. Father went and sat there straight away. On being told to leave, all of us went away. Then Ma herself spread a blanket for Father to rest on. From then onwards, Father stayed in that room in this manner for four or five months and was protecting the fire. He used to go to the medical school once in the afternoon. On the way back in the evening he would come to our house. On the second day, I took a blanket and kept it in that room as an *asana*. Kamalakanta was staying in the same room. The fire was guarded day and night. Some of us were appointed to keep the fire burning.

The next day, the Kali image was to be taken for immersion. All the ladies came in the afternoon. Nirajan

Preservation of the image Babu's wife said, "Ma, the image is so beautiful. I feel sad to have to immerse it."

Ma immediately replied, "If you are finding it difficult, then let it stay, it is not at all necessary to immerse it. None of us have called Her anyway; She has come by Herself. Let Her stay as long as She pleases." In this way Ma made another person speak up and kept the image

The task of offering every day a garland of red hibiscus flowers to Kali, was given to a new *brahmachāri* called Kamalakanta, who was a resident of Vikrampur. Kamalakanta had passed the matriculation examination. He refused to get married. He had no parents and had been brought up in his maternal grandfather's house. In between he had been very seriously ill. He became well by Ma's grace, and stayed on at her feet. He was a boy who could tolerate much hardship.

I recollect an incident that occurred one day. Once I went to Shahbagh and found that Ma was coughing a lot. Her

Several incidents
a) Ma's cough & its cure cough just would not stop. It was a winter evening. Ma asked me to pour a bucket of water over her. In that chilly weather after twilight, she bathed with a lot of cold water.

Some sour preserve was kept in the room. She asked me to feed it to her. She ate a lot of it and went to sleep. The next day she did not cough at all.

(b) While at Deoghar, several boils began to appear on Nandu's hands, so that he was unable to eat with his own hand and I used to feed him. After reaching

b) Nandu's illness
Calcutta, his hand became very painful. Ma and recovery had gone out somewhere. Nandu felt angry

that day. He looked upon Ma as his own mother and behaved that way with her. Ma also treated him like her child. Because of his anger he did not eat anything. When Ma returned she spoke to him at length and only then he ate. How much trouble compassionate Ma takes for her devotees! She her-

self washed Nandu's wounds and from that day, Ma would wash his wounds every day. Ma had said, "He will be able to eat food with his own hand within seven days." On the seventh day, Ma was to be offered bhoga at our house. The night before Nandu had stomach ache and was vomiting all night. He had had a similar pain earlier also once or twice. In that condition, he used to live only on barley-water for four or five days. The next day Ma came and food was offered to her. She said, "Call Nandu." At that time he was feeling terribly nauseated and was lying on his sick bed. But by Ma's orders he was brought out. Ma said, "We spoke of your eating with your own hand today— eat, eat as much as you can!" Saying this she kept sitting near him. Surprisingly the boy who had been unable to put anything into his mouth, ate fried rice, fish curry, vegetables and everything else. He recovered that very day and began eating with his own hands.

(c) One day a gentleman brought his incapacitated daughter to Ma, on the advice of Dr. Guruprasad. Bholanath coaxed

Cure of a paralysed girl Ma to say something. Ma suddenly said, "Let her be brought on Thursday." Bholanath

conveyed this message, accordingly they arrived on Thursday. Ma was then slicing betel nuts to be offered along with betel leaves to God. The girl was made to lie down near Ma. Ma threw a piece of betelnut on the ground near the girl, and asked her to pick it up. The girl did so with great difficulty. Ma told Bholanath, "Tell these people to go away now." They left. The next day the girl's father arrived and said, "How wonderful it is! Today some music was being played in the street. My sick daughter was

lying down, watching her brothers and sisters play. Suddenly, she heard the music and forgetting her illness she went outside along with the other children. Now she is walking about a good deal. It is Ma's unfathomable Grace." Later this girl's father came and made a food offering to Ma.

(d) Yet another incident occurred one day. A gentleman's son was very ill at Dacca, Gendariya. So they came to Shah-

bagh. Ma had been sitting outside till a little while before they arrived. Suddenly she got up, pulled down her veil and went inside her room.

"All bodies are mine" I wondered what had happened, who was about to come? A little later I saw that two gentlemen had arrived from Gendariya and were requesting Ma to go there. The patient was on his death-bed and had been unconscious for three days. Then I realised that Ma had already come to know about this and that was why she had got up and gone inside. Bholanath went and informed Ma. I have already said that Ma would not resist much in those days. So she went to that house. As soon as she entered the doorway of the house, the patient's wife came and touched Ma's feet. Ma felt an impediment and sat down. When it happens thus it usually forbodes contrary results. Ma got up after quite some time and went and sat near the patient's cot. The patient was unconscious. His tongue was hanging out. He had not been made to lie down comfortably on his bed. Ma said, "Make him lie properly." Saying this, she got up to hold him herself. What a turn of events those people had only heard about Ma and were newcomers. Just as Ma got ready to resettle the patient in his bed, one of his relatives spoke up, "Do not move him.

The doctor has forbidden it." Ma immediately folded her hands. Both times she had been obstructed. It was not due to anyone's fault. How could these people know? Ma said, "Whatever has to happen, happens in this way." A little later, Ma got up and came away.

The next day they again came to take Ma there. Ma took Father and myself with her. The patient's condition was just the same. Ma went and sat on the ground near the door. Bholanath was feeling very sad but since Ma had forbidden it, he could not make any request to her. He went to Father and said, "Please go to your Ma and make a gentle entreaty on this sick man's behalf." Father, compelled by Bholanath's words, went near Ma and started speaking for the sick man's recovery with folded hands. As soon as he made his request, Ma looked at Father in such a way that no further words came out of his mouth. A little later we left.

The next evening a man came from there again but Ma did not go. She told him, "Do not come again before tomorrow evening." The next afternoon Ma was sitting in the room in which she used to sleep earlier. She said to me, "The fire is burning in the kitchen. Please bring some of it." I brought some burning cinders in a vessel. Just as Ma got ready to put her hand into the vessel, Father scolded me and asked me to take the fire away. What could I do? I told Ma, "I am bound to obey both (Ma's and Father's) your orders. You told me, so I brought the fire. Father is forbidding me, so I am taking it back." And I removed the fire from near Ma.

A little later, a gentleman arrived. Ma asked him, "Have you got a match box? Light a match, please." He did not know what was the matter. He lit a match and took it near Ma. Ma put her finger into the flame and told him, "Keep holding it, as long as it burns." He did just that. Ma sat steadily with her finger in the flame, till the match burnt out. After twilight we received the news that the patient at Gendariya had died. He was cremated the same evening. Ma said with a little laugh, "That is the reason why a little while ago I burnt a bit of this body of mine also. All bodies are mine indeed." We were all taken aback, wondering.

Some days later, Ma had gone to the Tikatuli house for kirtan and was to spend the night there. I was running very high fever. Kirtan and bhoga were over, all the devotees had left. Ma was in no mood to sleep that night, but Bholanath went to sleep. Ma strokes my body during my feverish condition

Ma asked him, "What shall I do?" He said "Khukuni is having fever, do go to her room, please." Ma got up and came to the room in which I was lying and sat on the ground. Ma always sat on the floor. We were not in the habit of offering her an *āsana*, nor did Ma sit on one. After a long time, now, Ma has started sitting on an *āsana*. A relative was fanning me, but since the night was far gone, she had begun to drowse. Ma was sitting and watching her. A little later Ma made her get up. No one else was present in the room, as it was late at night and everyone was asleep. Water had been stored on the veranda close by. Ma herself brought water in a bucket and washed

my head nicely. Then she wiped it with the end of her *sari*. I do not know if the water caused me to catch a chill or not, but Ma's compassion touched me immensely. Then Ma sat on my bed and began fanning me with one hand, while she stroked my body with the other. A few days earlier, Ma had said, "Nobody should touch me much." I always followed Ma around, so this command caused me much sorrow. One day I had told Ma very sadly: 'It makes me very unhappy to stay far away like this. I wish I could fall seriously ill! Then at least you would place your hand on my body and I would feel your touch' I spoke on in this strain. Now Ma was saying to me, "Now I am stroking your body with my hand. You like it, don't you?" I was suffering intensely from fever then. Yet I cannot describe the bliss I experienced from this compassion shown to me by Ma. I laughed and said to Ma, "I am getting much relief and bliss." And I touched Ma's feet. Before dawn Ma got up, wrapped a bed-sheet around herself and slept on the table. This was her normal way of sleeping. She used to lie on the bare ground most of the time. She would not bother about cold, heat, dampness or slush, she just lay down anywhere at all.

During the Durga Puja in October 1926, Sri Shashi Bhushan Dasgupta of Chittagong came to Shahbagh. He was keen to have Ma's darshan and to take her photograph. That morning Ma had gone to the room on the terrace and was lying there. She had made Atal Dada's wife sit outside and had told her, "Let no one come to me inside the room." Meanwhile Bholanath turned up with Jyotish Dada and Shashi

Bhusan. Ma was then in *samādhi*. A divine light was emanating from her body all around. Even after Ma came out of *samādhi* the light was still present but it had shrunk and was glowing on Ma's forehead as a white spot; it was not totally hidden. Ma was taken for the photograph and made to sit at a particular place. She was still in an exalted mood and unable to keep her eyes open properly. Shashi Babu had brought several photographic plates for his use, but they all got spoilt one after the other. The last photograph came out well. Two strange things were visible in the photograph. One was a round spot of light on Ma's forehead. The second, Jyotish Dada standing behind Ma in the photograph, although he was not standing behind Ma when the photograph was being taken.*

Soon after the Kali Puja described above, Ashu's mother (Ashu is Ashutosh Bandopadhyaya of Ramakrishna Road, Tikatuli) had some special dream and performed Kali Puja. A few days later, Virendra Dada also dreamt something and resolved to perform Kali Puja. All the arrangements were made. It had been decided to sacrifice a goat, but when

Kali Puja done by Ashu's mother and Virendra Dada

* I have heard from Ma that when the photograph was being taken, she remembered Jyotish Dada. Since this thought was so strong it became manifest and materialized acquiring a form which was impressed upon the photographic plate. At that time Ma was in an exalted state, as has been said earlier. Once before this when a photograph had been taken, Ma who was in *samādhi* raised her left hand suddenly. In that photograph also a mark like a full moon appeared. Much earlier too a dot of light had appeared in a photograph below Ma's *bindu* mark on her forehead.

Virendra Dada was sharpening the sword, his fingers got cut. Hearing this Ma said, "It has happened for the best. I was also thinking that a little blood was necessary. Keep some blood on a *bel* leaf." This was done. Bholanath did the worship, Ma kept lying down. A gentleman had given a red sari to Ma, which she placed under her head when lying down nearby on the ground. The *puja* was completed. All the preparations for the goat sacrifice were ready and Bholanath went to carry it out. Just as he was about to perform the sacrifice, Ma suddenly got up agitatedly and ran and put her hand on the goat's neck and sat down. Her condition was disorderly and her eyes were sparkling. Looking at Bholanath Ma said, "You will not be able to give this animal offering." Everyone was stunned, Bholanath lowered the sword. Ma stroked the goat. Everyone was watching what Ma was doing. She called Ashu and asked him to wear the red sari which was below her head. As soon as he draped it on and came she put a red sindur mark on his forehead. Then she asked Ashu's mother, "Can you leave your son?" She agreed, saying, "If you say so, I can leave him." Ma retorted, "But he is not only your son. Why should the boy's father (Yatindranath Bandopadhyaya) let him go?" Saying this, she laughed a little and said to Ashu, "Keep the goat in your lap and come with me." Ma started walking, a few of us walked with her, holding a light while Ashu carried the goat. Ma went to a round pond in a field behind the present Ramna Ashram and asked Ashu to release the goat. She stroked the entire body of the animal with her feet and then returned to Shahbagh. The goat followed Ma and sat near Ma when she sat down.

The *puja* was completed. Everyone received *prasada* and departed. The goat stayed on at Shahbagh. Whenever kirtan was performed it sat near Ma's lap. In the night it would sleep under Ma's cot. It remained near Ma almost all the time. One day it was very cold. Ma put a blanket on the goat and made it sleep and said, "In his previous birth he was wrapped in a blanket. In this birth also a blanket has been placed over his body." Virendra Dada had asked many times, "Who was this goat?" In course of conversation Ma once said, "He was a *sahayati*." The goat became very plump and healthy, eating the grass off the field. Once when Ma had gone out of Dacca, the goat jumped over the fence and disappeared.

A few days later Ma asked that the image of Kali be shifted from the round room to the room at the corner of the hall.

The shifting of
the image of
Kali

Ma used to live in that hall earlier. Obeying Ma's orders, Yogesh, Surondra, Vinay and others bathed very early in the morning and lifted the image from the round room. The same night a terrible storm raged and caused the door of the round room to break and fall just where the image of Kali had been kept. It was only then that everybody realised why Ma had had the image removed.

Incense was not being burnt during kirtan in the earlier days. One day, during kirtan a very strong scent of incense

About incense
during kirtan

began emanating. Even after the kirtan everybody could smell the fragrance of incense in the garden. A person enquired, "Where has so much fragrance of incense come from? Incense was not

burnt at all. Jatu spoke up saying, "Why? I saw Khukuni Didi lighting incense during kirtan." But in fact, incense had not been burnt at all. Then Ma gave the order, "Let incense be burnt every day during kirtan."

As the days passed it seemed as if Ma was ceasing to perform one job after the other. Her hand became crooked.

Change in Ma's condition Ma would say, "See, I am not leaving householderhood, it is leaving me." Ma did not renounce domestic work or service by her own will.

But all these duties abandoned Ma. Ma used to serve Bholanath in every way with her own hands. Even though she was not able to, she would somehow cook with her left hand if Bholanath told her to cook. Once, at our Tikatuli house, Bholanath lay down on a cot after dinner and said to Ma, "Please massage my legs." Ma sat on the ground near his feet and began pressing them. But her hand started twisting and she was unable to continue. Bholanath was lying down, so he could not see Ma's condition. He said, "Apply some force, do." As soon as he said that, Ma began to sob loudly like a small child and said, "You do not know that I am unable to do it." Bholanath sat up at once and said, "It is not necessary." But who would listen? Ma cried and cried, went into samadhi and then fell down. She remained in that state throughout the night and was roused late the next morning. Then she went to Shahbagh.

In this way all kinds of work were falling away from her. Sometimes if she tried, she suddenly managed to accomplish one or two jobs, but otherwise almost all work had ceased.

There was a time when Ma would do any amount of work without a trace of fatigue and without eating anything. But now, though there were several jobs to be attended to, her attention never went towards them and even if she tried to do something she could not do it properly. She was eating nine grains of cooked rice a day. Then the routine of eating three grains went on for a long time. It was surprising that even if a single grain more than the three grains was put into her mouth, she would throw it out. She just could not swallow it. She would not eat anything more than the three grains of rice.

A few days later, Ma and Bholanath were taken to the Rai Bahadur's house at Paruldiya. I also went along. Just as

before, I was getting fever almost every day and I was not taking any medicine. I would eat whatever Ma told me to eat, rice and soup, curds and rice, anything. I never used to sleep much, I would keep roaming about with Ma. In Paruldiya Ma said to me and Bholanath, "Come, let us go and bathe in the pond." I bathed along with Ma inspite of my fever. The fever which had persisted for two or three months stopped after the bath and did not come on again.

Visit to Dacca and Paruldiya Kali Puja was going to be performed. All the people were requesting Ma to perform the *pūjā* but Ma did not agree. Attempts had been made to arrange for a priest, but for some reason, no priest was available. Finally Bholanath requested Ma and she was compelled to do the *pūjā*. Bholanath also attended to the sacrificial fire and helped in the worship. Since many of the inmates of the house had been abroad, *pūjā*

was hardly ever performed there. It was only due to Ma's presence that a *pujā* had been arranged.

Father arrived at Paruldiya in the morning. That day we all started from there and came away. Ma went by boat.

Father was also with her and requested Ma,
Visit to Rajadiya and other places "Our ancestral home is very close by. Please come once and purify our ancestor's abode."

Bholanath agreed. So Father took Ma to his ancestral home at Rajadiya and offered food to her. Ma left right after her meal and Father also went to Dacca. Bholanath, Ma and I went to Sitanath Kushari's house (Maroni's home). A little distance from Rajadiya is Bholanath's house. We went there also but no one was present. Ma did not stop at that house, but Bholanath and we went and had a look. Kushariji revered Ma as a Goddess. He felt blessed to have obtained Ma and he sat near her and read out the Durga Saptasati (seven hundred cantos in praise of the Goddess Durga). Some *pujā* was also performed there, but we came to Dacca before the *pujā*. At the request of a devotee Ma had also been to Autsahi village from Rajadiya.

A few days later, Ma was again taken to Paruldiya for the *śrāddha* ceremony of the Rai Bahadur's mother. That time, again, Bholanath, myself and a gardener accompanied Ma. Rai Bahadur had had a new medical dispensary and a doctor's quarters constructed. He provided accommodation for

Visit to Paruldiya once more—Rai Bahadur's mother's *śrāddha* December 1926

Ma during her stay in those quarters. Food was cooked for the three of us there. Rai Bahadur told Ma, "We have no family preceptor (*kula guru*), I regard you as my

Guru. Therefore when I perform the *śrāddha* ceremony for my mother, you may please sit before me ; this is my request." It was granted. But while Rai Bahadur was performing his mother's *śrāddha* he was wearing his pyjamas and shirt. Firstly, he was old and secondly, he was in the habit of wearing those clothes all the time. The priest also did not have the courage to tell the Rai Bahadur not to be dressed in pyjamas. He was making Rai Bahadur perform the ceremonies with those clothes on. But Ma asked the priest, "Are the shirt and other garments worn during these ceremonies?" The priest replied, "It is not correct to wear them, but since he cannot sit bare-bodied, I did not say anything." The Rai Bahadur also said, "I catch cold. Because of this fear I did not take off my garments." Ma immediately said, "Nothing will happen during these *śrāddha* and other ceremonies. It is correct to take off everything. Nothing will happen." Rai Bahadur declared, "I shall do whatever you tell me to do." So saying, he took off his habitual clothes and put on a *dhoti* (a single piece of cloth wrapped around the body below the waist), wrapped a cloth over his torso and sat down. When all the ceremonies were completed after twilight, the Rai Bahadur said to Ma, "I never stay bare bodied this way the whole day long. If I remain that way even for a while, I fall ill. But today, since you told me, nothing has happened to me — in fact I feel healthier."

On Ma's command, kirtan was arranged for the night. Very much kirtan was performed. Ma said to all the little girls (the Rai Bahadur's grand-daughters), "You all have nothing to do during the *śrāddha*, so perform uninterrupted

(*akhandā*) *nāma kirtana* the whole night through." It was decided that they would do their *nāma kirtana* after the day's kirtan. Bhramara being the eldest, she was going to lead the *nāma kirtana*. Ma went into a lot of *bhāva* during kirtan. She perambulated round the entire house. How beautiful Ma looked. Her hair was in disarray. One end of her *sari* was tied round her waist, a wonderful gaze was present in her eyes. Ma went to the place where sweets were being prepared and made the cooks also sing *nāma kirtana*. The Muslims were standing on one side. Ma went near them, uttered the name of Allah herself and made them repeat it. Rai Bahadur, his children and grand-children, all began repeating God's Name. Before this, no one in that house had even heard the name of Hari. Seeing this kind of scene, everyone was astonished. On Ma's instructions the Rai Bahadur took a potful of burning incense and perambulated around the kirtan room. He was as if driven by some kind of force to do all these things that day. Prior to this he had never believed in all this. Just before the kirtan came to an end, Ma pressed my mouth tightly and said only this into my ear, "Name." She could not speak further for she had not come to her normal state. I understood this as Ma having asked me to observe silence and perform *japa*. I began to do that. The kirtan stopped.

We took Ma to the place where she was to stay and everybody came along with us. All were entranced by Ma's condition. I was keeping silent and doing *japa*. The girls now arrived to perform *nāma kirtana* after having dined. They sang kirtan for a long time and then went to sleep. Ma had told me to do *japa*. I was afraid of drowsing, so I walked

to and fro while doing it. Very early in the morning, Ma got up and began singing *nāma kirtana*. She woke up Bhramara and the other girls. Later the kirtan stopped.

In Dacca, also, kirtan was to be started, I do not remember in what connection. It was to be begun on a Monday or a Thursday. Father was in Shahbagh since Kali Puja day. Ma had brought me along, leaving Kamalsakanta in Father's service. By Ma's order, a telegram was sent to Father that until Ma returned to Dacca, kirtan was to be sung continuously. Father had been keeping the kirtan going by getting the Medical School students and other people to sing. We reached Dacca on the third day of the kirtan. We could hear the singing from the road. Ma went into *samādhi* in the carriage. As the carriage stopped in front of the room, everyone sang even louder out of joy. They began singing the refrain "*Ma has come to our house, Hari bol, Hari bol*." In their great happiness they started dancing while they sang. Ma was brought down from the carriage somehow or other, went into the midst of the kirtan and rolled on the ground and prostrated. We found that Nirmal Babu had come to Dacca from Varanasi to perform Rayani Puja.* Didi, Nirmal

* Nirmal Babu (Nirmal Chandra Chattopadhyaya) had first met Ma in the same month of Agrahayan. He came to Father's Tikatuli house in the month of Magh and performed the Rayani Puja. Ma stayed in the Tikatuli house for four days during this puja. When she was returning to Shahbagh, she hurt her foot on the stairs and a bone on her foot was fractured. Ma stayed on her cot for seven days — she neither got down, nor did she eat anything. What was the significance of this injury on Ma's foot? Later, one day, Ma said in this connection, "See, when a goat was sacrificed during that Puja, its ear was cut. Since the ear had been cut before the neck of the sacrificial goat was cut fully, it was an imperfect offering. The priest could not devise any remedy for this shortcoming. But since the Puja had been performed for the welfare of your Father,

Babu and others saw this sight and gazed enthralled in great bliss. Everyone's eyes were filled with tears. After a long time Ma became a little steady.

One morning, Nirmal Babu came to Shahbagh. The previous night all of us had been staying with Ma. Ma told everyone to perform *nāma-kirtana* and Ma also joined in it for a very long time. The whole night was spent thus. The next morning, as soon as Nirmal Babu suddenly turned up at the door at Shahbagh, Ma also went and stood near the door. In those days touching Ma's feet was forbidden. But Nirmal Babu had brought two hibiscus flowers. Engrossed in his devotion, he offered one flower at Ma's feet and put the other on her head. He placed his head at Ma's feet and prostrated before her. Along with him, Nirmal Babu's wife and a couple of other devotees also prostrated at Ma's feet. Ma did not say anything. Seeing Ma accepting *pranāmas* in this manner, a few other devotees came running to bow down before her. But Ma walked away and they did not have the courage to touch her feet again after that. Ma kept both the flowers in her hand. Later, when a wicker basket was taken to Shahbagh to gather flowers for the Rāmā Kali Puja, Ma put one of the flowers into that basket and told Nirmal Babu, "I have put your flower into the basket of flowers kept for *puja*." Nirmal Babu replied, "It is alright. Put it wherever you desire."

Nirmal Babu has darshan of Ma in the form of Goddess Saraswati
the imperfection in the sacrifice was very inauspicious—such a thought occurred to me. Therefore, this body received such an injury. It just happened, I do not do anything by my own will. Whenever there is fear of something bad happening to someone who has put his trust into this body, something or the other happens to this body itself.

Soon after this incident, Ma went to Siddheshwar. Several people walked with her. Ma went and sat on the *āsana* there. A little later, Ma returned to Shahbagh by a car belonging to the Dhānakoda house. Nirmal Babu and the other gentlemen were returning on foot to Shahbagh. It must have been about 10 a.m. In the bright sunlight, Nirmal Babu saw the figure of Goddess Saraswati leaning against a pillar of the dance hall. When he went closer, he saw that it was Ma herself in the form of that image. Nirmal Babu said he had never before seen such a fair complexion. He was very reserved by nature but he was so flabbergasted by this vision that he blurted it out to everybody that very moment.

About Kulada Bandopadhyaya
We heard that a gentleman named Kuladakant Bandopadhyaya was fasting since the beginning of the kirtan. He had taken a vow that he would partake of

some light refreshment only after the *kirtana* was stopped after Ma returned. He had seen Ma a long time ago, after which he had not come again. He had returned to Dacca only a few days earlier. He had come three days ago and was refusing to even drink water before he got Ma's darshan. He prostrated before Ma and with Ma's permission he drank some water. He is an extremely devout person, capable of enduring much hardship. He has now relinquished his home permanently and is an inmate of the Ashram. In May or June 1935 when Yogesh Dada went to Uttarkashi, Kulada Dada was appointed in his place to perform daily worship and sacrifices at the Annapūrṇa temple. After the Ashram was instituted, Kulada Dada made his youngest son a

brahmachāri in the *ashrama*. The thread ceremony of this boy had been performed at the Siddheshwari Ashram.

Ma was playing her divine *kīlā* in this manner. At first the worship of the Kali image was not particularly elaborate.

Relighting of the sacrificial fire and arrangements for Kali Puja Kamalakanta would offer a garland and Father would recite the Bhagavad Gita and the Durga Saptashati. When Father was staying at the Kali temple, he used to recite the Gita and Chandi regularly and do his daily worship, *sandhyā* etc. Ma would comment, "This is itself worship".

Since the time of making me observe silence at Paruldiya, some person had to remain near the sacrificial fire at the Kali temple keeping silence (mauna) and repeating God's name. Kamalakanta, I and another lady were given this task to be done by turns. The fire had to be guarded day and night together with the uninterrupted repetition of God's name. One night, Kamalakanta guarded the fire from twelve to three. After him I was to keep watch. At three o'clock, Father also got up and sat down for his daily worship. When I awoke at three and saw that the fire had gone out due to Kamalakanta's negligence, I ran to inform Ma. Bholanath roused Ma with great difficulty. Ma heard the news and with Bholanath and me inside the room, she closed the door. Thereafter on Ma's instructions Bholanath kindled the fire. Ma forbade us to reveal how the fire had been lit. Keeping a fire in an incense container near me, Ma said, "Keep a vow of silence for seven days and guard this fire." I faithfully did so. After seven days, Ma and Bholanath prepared a pit near the pond in Shahbagh and placed the fire into it. From that time onwards,

Kulada Dada was instructed to perform some duties regarding that fire. Sometimes *choru* (rice boiled in milk without sugar) and other things were cooked on that fire. Kulada Dada lived on that alone. The duties of performing the Kali Puja and looking after the sacrificial fire were assigned to Kulada Dada gradually.* He alone knew what regulations were to be observed by him. Ma used to speak about each job to the person it was given to — everything was not disclosed to everybody.

* He used to complete the work of the Kali Puja and the above mentioned sacrificial fire and return to his home about three or four miles away, in the dead of night. He used to fast, live on fruit and observe everything ordered by Ma at any time.

CHAPTER V

In the early spring of 1927 the Pūrṇa Kumbha festival was being held at Hardwar. Bholanath and Ma were taking us

Pilgrimage to Hardwar to see the Maha Kumbha— Phalgun (February March) 1927

along to have the sacred Kumbha bath. After arrangements to perform Kali Puja and to maintain the sacrificial fire were made, we left with Ma for Hardwar. All of us

of Calcutta and his wife, Matari Pisim, Didima and Dada Mahāsaya set out for the pilgrimage. At Calcutta, Rajendra Kushari had made arrangements for Ma to stay in a vacant house belonging to the Kundus of Bhāgyakul. We were a party of nineteen or twenty people, therefore it did not seem proper to stay with any family. Yogendra Babu, the son of Raja Janakinath Rai, had Ma's darshan and became greatly devoted to her. One day he took Ma to his house and arranged for kirtan there. Ma went into deep *bhāvas*. Many people had gathered. The Rai Bahadur was at Calcutta; by his efforts kirtan was also performed at the house of Pyari Bann who belonged to the household of the Nawab of Dacca and was the owner of Shahbagh. The Rai Bahadur worked as manager for Pyari Bann. Ma also went into ecstasy during the kirtan at Pyari Bann's residence. All the members of the Nawab's household sang nāma-kirtan. Later on as well, kirtan was sung many times in that house. They regarded Ma with the utmost reverence. A large crowd had assembled there

Ma also went to Surendra Mohan Mukhopadhyaya's house. Chandi Babu, Harsha Babu, Ananta Babu and others came and had Ma's darshan.

Ma was then in a novel condition she could not get into a boat. As soon as she climbed into a boat, she would start

Changes in Ma's moods

identifying herself with the waves and would want to jump into the water. It became very difficult to hold her back. Later on Ma explained, "The water attracted me so strongly, it was as if this body wanted to mingle with the water — no feeling of any difference between the water and this body existed."

Then another mood prevailed. She could not climb stairs. As soon as she began climbing, she would go into *saṁādhi*. She could not keep her feet on the stairs. She would try to place her feet into space and would fall down. Describing this mood, Ma once said, "This body is being attracted by space. Just as air permeates space, similarly it feels as if the body also permeated space. At this time no other consciousness prevails, therefore I am unable to keep my foot on the stair." If Ma had to be taken up to the first floor or brought down she had to be held and made to climb up or come down. Ma used to say, "The feeling that I had to climb up or go down using stairs, just did not exist. It was as if everything were nothingness — and this body, too, was thus." What an extraordinary state it was !

We had to go to Hardwar via Varanasi, where we were to stay at Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyaya's house. His son, Jitendra Dada, who was at Calcutta, had written to Varanasi.

Father had also written that arrangements should be made for Ma to stay downstairs in the house. Nirmal Babu and others had come and seen Ma. Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyaya had to leave Varanasi for a day on receiving an urgent telegram.

Varanasi — at Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyaya's house

His wife and Nirmal Babu with his family were present at the station to receive Ma. They had towels round their necks and stood with folded palms. As soon as the train arrived and they saw Ma, they prostrated full length on the ground. They then took Ma to their house. All the doors of the house were decorated with garlands and auspicious urns (*mangala kalasha*) to celebrate the arrival of Ma. After Ma and Bholanath had their meal, everyone received *prasada*. Nepal Dada (Nepal Chandra Chakravarty*) had his very first darshan of Ma at this time.

One day, Nirmal Babu's wife and another person who was also a disciple of her Guru, took Ma to see their Guru named Sri Jitendranath Thakur. No conversation took place between Ma and Thakur. Ma sat for a while and then came away. We had all gone with Ma.

After reaching Varanasi we heard that Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyaya had suddenly had a vision of Ma. Two days ago, in the evening, when he was seated on the terrace, he saw Ma standing before him, dressed in a red sari. He had never before seen Ma. He had only heard about her from Jitendra Dada and Nirmal Babu's wife. When he learnt that Ma was coming he was not particularly enthused. Yet, having heard that Father had become an ardent devotee and since

*Later Swami Narayanandanda Tirtha.

Father was himself bringing her and also since several others had spoken very reverently about Ma, he had decided to have Ma's darshan that time. Soon after his vision, he bought a red silk sari for Ma, and installed auspicious urns at the door and decorated the doorways with floral garlands. He felt that the Goddess Herself had arrived. In the night Ma slept for awhile and then sat up. Bholanath was asleep. Ma began trembling in her exalted mood as she sat. In the morning Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyaya came for Ma's darshan. As soon as he saw her, he realised that Ma's countenance was exactly what he had seen in his vision. He was overwhelmed with devotion and started reciting invocations. He draped the red silk sari round Ma, and began worshipping her with red hibiscus flowers. Soon after leaving Dacca, Ma had waved aside the order forbidding anyone to touch her feet. Several people came to bow down at her feet. Ma would sit quietly with folded hands. It was impossible to stop so many people, specially because Ma had said, "I was unable to let anyone touch my feet before. Now I see that my hands are not different from my feet. There is no difference between the two. When I do not forbid anyone to hold my hands, why then should I forbid people to touch my feet?" The next day, *kirtan* was held. Ma went into *bhāva*, but she did not roll on the ground. She began moving about in the whole house in a unique manner.

The next day we left for Hardwar and arrived there early the following morning. Nirmal Babu had reached earlier to arrange for our stay at a *dharmaśālā* and was present at the station. It was the month of Phalgun (February). Everybody

was shivering with cold. Wrapped in blankets we reached the *dharmasālā*. It was the first day of the sacred Kumbha Mela (a dip in the river Ganges at this time is considered very auspicious). Ma and all of us stood in the *dharmatālā* and watched the procession of sādhus. Then we all went to the Brahmakunda for a bath. After staying

Kumbha-bath at Hardwar and return to Dacca via Mathura and Vrindaban

at the *dharmatālā* in Hardwar for seven days, we went to the *dharmasālā* belonging to the Kalikamaliwala at Rishikesh and stayed there for two days. After visiting *Lakshmana Jhula* and other places, we returned and stayed in a straw hut in the Ashram of a Punjabi sādhu at Bhimgoda. On the day that we returned from Rishikesh, we received a telegram with news of the death of Sitanath Kushari and another telegram informing us that Jyotish Dada's health was very bad. Even before this, he had been sick and now seemed to be in the early stages of tuberculosis. On the night of receiving these two telegrams, Ma set out for Dacca taking all of us with her. Bholanath's youngest brother Yamni was also with us. It had been decided to visit Mathura, Vrindaban, Agra and other places of pilgrimage on the way back.

Just a little while before leaving, Ma took Father and myself aside and told us to remain in Hardwar for three months. She also instructed us as to what regulations were to be followed in our diet and manner of living. We felt very sad at the thought of having to stay back while Ma went away, but at the same time we experienced the wonderful happiness that is felt when obeying Ma's orders. After our encounter with Ma, this was the very first time we were being

separated from her. My heart was utterly restless. Later in the evening, Ma consoled us and leaving us in the same ashram, she departed with all the others. We were not particularly attracted by the Kumbha Mela, Ma's company was our main interest. Ma also told us, "If Father feels unwell, leave for Varanasi immediately. Do not tarry here."

Later I heard that when Ma had received the telegram she had said to Bholanath, "Look, I saw Jyotish seated in my lap." Bholanath immediately replied, "Then there is no fear for his life." Yet, at that time, Jyotish Babu's condition was such that the doctors had given up hope.

Ma went to various places and then returned to Dacca. After about one and a half months, for some reason, Bholanath wrote and informed us that Ma had asked us to go to Dacca. Father had become very unwell by this time and so we went to Varanasi without any delay. On the way I also caught a fever. As soon as both of us had recovered, we left for Dacca and presented ourselves at Ma's feet. We heard that Jyotish Dada was better than before. He was staying at Ramna, near Shahbagh in a rented house. Ma was going there every day and some *prasāda* was being sent daily.

One day, Father took Ma to the Tikatuli house and worshipped her feet, reciting his *īsta* mantra. Ma got up as soon as the *pūjā* was over. Ma was in a wonderful, exalted condition. Seated in that state she said to Father, "From today, your external worship with flowers and *bel* leaves ceases." Father prostrated again at Ma's feet. A little later Ma stood up. It seemed as if she were going away to

Shahbagh. Later she said, "I had thought I would go down from the veranda of the two storeyed building facing the road." But there was no way to go down on that side.

A few days later Ma said to Father, "Write a letter to your family preceptor. Please ascertain what he says about this matter." Surprisingly, he also did not object to Father's relinquishing external worship, in fact he gave permission gladly.

Father suffered from severe pain in his legs; moreover if he walked a little too much, he would get palpitation. He also could not travel much by train. Ma made him do regularly a particular kind of *pranayama*. This helped him a lot. Ma had asked him to sit in meditation for even more than twenty-four hours continuously. Father did so by Ma's grace. Ma said, "No one else has been made to work like this, only you are being made to do it. Whosoever is capable of a particular type of practice, is told to perform it. Everyone is not alike." By following Ma's instructions, Father was able to sit still for a very long time without any difficulty. Earlier his health would be adversely affected if he so much as washed his feet with cold water in the hot season. His digestion was very poor too. Even as a youngster he used to fall ill if he bathed in a pond, so that he had stopped bathing in ponds. But now in his old age, he was bathing in a pond, eating any kind of food as Ma's *prasada*, and was walking long distances. By Ma's grace he was able to tolerate all this.

Many people started taking Ma to their own homes. The wife of Dinesh Babu of Dhankoda took Ma to her place

several times and arranged for kirtan. Ma also went to many other houses. All the devotees gathered wherever Ma went. The wife of Nalini Babu of Uyari and her brother's wife (Baby Didi and Suniti Didi) came sometimes.

One day Ma was going to the Dhanakoda house. Just as Ma's car turned on to the road, a gentleman arrived by

The efficacy of one-pointed-ness horse carriage to have Ma's darshan. As soon as he saw that Ma had gone out somewhere, he told his coachman agitatedly,

"Follow the car fast." He did not stop to think of the futility of chasing a car in a horse carriage. His only thought was that Ma was leaving and he had to catch up with her. After going a little way, when Ma saw that a horse carriage was racing behind the car, she said, "Please stop the car for a moment." As the car came to a halt, the carriage pulled up near it. The gentleman alighted and took the dust off Ma's feet. He got the information that Ma was going to the house at Dhanakoda and within a little while he was there. Ma spoke about this incident to some devotees at Shahbagh, "You saw, didn't you? On going ahead one-pointedly in this manner, even a car stopped for a horse-carriage. Later, when he got the news, he was able to come and meet us after a short while. Though we were going by car, he was able to catch up with us in a horse carriage and meet us. This was possible only because he went ahead with one fixed aim."

Baul's wife always came for the kirtan at Shahbagh. She experienced strange *bhavas* during kirtan. On the day after

receiving initiation, Chintaharan Babu's wife also went into Ecstatic states of an unusual state. In the evening during Baul Babu's wife and Chintaharan Babu's wife during kirtan kirtan she fell down flat, holding on to Ma's feet. It was nearly two o'clock in the morning before she could be roused. Ever since she has been having similar experiences off and on.

Once Ma lived without drinking water for thirteen days. Then she asked Bholanath to give her some water and he made her drink it. Then again there was a time when she did not let any water touch her lips for twenty-three days. She did not even wash her mouth. After twenty-three days, Kamalakanta, Atal Dada, Nandu and I sat near Ma one whole night through. Ma was sitting on the floor and Bholanath was sleeping. At about two thirty or three in the morning, Ma asked for a pot full of water. When it was brought she woke up Bholanath and said, "The five of you in the room, please make me drink the water from this pot little by little." The water was poured into Ma's mouth a little at a time. Ma was drinking water after twenty-three days. She said, "I wanted to see how it feels to live without water. But I found that I was forgetting about drinking water altogether. And if I forget, you would be faced with a problem. Therefore I drank water though I did not feel the need of it." Ma sat up after drinking the water. A little later she got up suddenly, opened the door and went outside (Ma was then staying in the circular room.) She brought five lotus flowers from near the door. Laughing, she said, "See,

Ma forgoes drinking water for a long period—the wonderful prize for offering a drink of water to Ma

the floor and Bholanath was sleeping. At about two thirty or three in the morning, Ma asked for a pot full of water. When it was brought she woke up Bholanath and said, "The five of you in the room, please make me drink the water from this pot little by little." The water was poured into Ma's mouth a little at a time. Ma was drinking water after twenty-three days. She said, "I wanted to see how it feels to live without water. But I found that I was forgetting about drinking water altogether. And if I forget, you would be faced with a problem. Therefore I drank water though I did not feel the need of it." Ma sat up after drinking the water. A little later she got up suddenly, opened the door and went outside (Ma was then staying in the circular room.) She brought five lotus flowers from near the door. Laughing, she said, "See,

someone has put these five lotus flowers here. Five of you have made me drink water. Exactly five lotuses have been kept near the door. The five of you, take these flowers." Saying this she gave one flower to each of us. Who would keep lotus flowers in the doorway so late in the night? We were dumbfounded to see this. But everything is possible with Ma. Therefore I do not always note even very special incidents.

Speaking of the past, Ma once remarked, "I wanted to remain confined in Siddheshwari for three months, but Bholanath just did not allow it. He came in the way of my doing so. That is the reason why he fell so very ill.

Jyotish Dada was very sick. One afternoon, Ma and Bholanath went to his house. Ma said, "Go and have a dip

A few earlier incidents—occasional revelations of supernatural power
in the pond there in front." By coincidence all the inmates of the house were asleep. Jyotish Dada immediately went and had a dip, then changed his clothes and lay down on his bed. A little later some people woke up.

Noticing his wet clothes, they came to know of what had happened. Jyotish Dada was afraid that if now there were excessive bleeding, everyone would get agitated and attribute it to his bath. But his condition did not seem to have worsened in the very least, in fact he kept better that day than on other days. How many such incidents have not occurred!

Sometimes Ma would hold a flower or some other article in her hand and keep holding it for five or six days. Then she would give the object or the flower to someone.

I have already mentioned that Ma would keep walking about during the night or would sit up as she pleased. In short, a very lively mood would set in as the night drew on. Often she would in the night go by carriage to many people's houses. On certain nights she just would not remain quiet. Even as she lay on her bed, she would utter various things which no one could comprehend. On a certain occasion, she asked as she lay down, "Where is Italy? What kind of people live there?" A couple of days later the Italian Professor Tucci came to Shahbagh to meet Ma.

Sometimes English words would emanate from Ma's mouth, sometimes other foreign languages would emerge. At times she made Bholanath write down what came forth. At night, even while she was sleeping, such utterances would occur. Then on some nights she was unable to lie down, she walked about as she pleased.

Once food was offered to Ma after kirtan at Niranjan Babu's house, and she remained there that night and spent the whole night walking about. She would read people's minds on many occasions. Some person would come with a question. Ma, while speaking to some other person would reply to the question clearly. The one who had come to Ma found that he had no need to ask at all. This happened not once but innumerable times.

I have seen several examples of Ma's inner vision. I had finished doing some work and as soon as I went near Ma in the afternoon, Ma said, "I was lying down in the afternoon and could see that you were doing such and such a job." She described the work correctly. Many others have seen such

examples of Ma's clairvoyance. But Ma would reveal it very rarely.

Once I asked Ma at Shahbagh, "Ma, do you come to know when we yearn for you?" Ma replied, "Do you know how I understand it? Whenever your attention is drawn towards me, I see you in various forms near me. I understand immediately that you are thinking of me." Then she said, "One night I was sleeping inside the net. I saw that you were gently lifting the net and touching my feet."

One day Ma was seated on the *āsana* at Siddheshwari. Kirtan was about to begin. Several people were inside the room. A newcomer who was a stranger to us, was standing there. He looked at Ma and said, "Do tell why I have come here. I shall not speak out. I have asked a question mentally. If you reply I shall understand." Ma glanced at him for a moment and said, "I have replied, understand it! You questioned me mentally, I have also replied mentally. Understand it." She said this looking at him and laughed a little. That man did not say anything. The next day I went to Shahbagh and saw that the same man was sitting in one corner of Ma's room and weeping. He wanted to bow before Ma and ask for forgiveness, but Ma was engrossed in various domestic chores and did not seem to pay any attention to him. I do not know what was going on in that man's mind. He was upset and weeping away. I do not remember exactly what happened after that.

Once Ma was not acquiescing to something on some occasion, but Bholanath was persistently requesting Ma. Finally Ma did it, but for fifteen days she was unable to enter a room.

She stayed in the open in rain and storm. I have seen other similar incidents ; she would do something to obey Bholanath's injunction, but later contrary activities would appear in Ma's body which frightened Bholanath. So that he too felt afraid to press Ma on any issue, lest some other calamity occurred. Ma would often say, "Whatever has to happen will happen. When he (Bholanath) is telling me to do it I may as well do so." And she would perform whatever he requested.

I remember another incident of Ma's clairvoyance. Once a person brought some food offering for Ma, but Ma was not at her residence. When Ma returned to Shahbagh the food offering was prepared and by the time *prasāda* had been served and eaten it was evening. Yogesh Bandopadhyaya came to Shahbagh in the evening and heard that the food offering had been made and distributed. He told Ma, "I did not get *prasāda*. I want to receive *prasāda* just now." Ma did not say anything special, but asked for some spices to be ground. Meanwhile someone had presented a big fish to Jyotish Dada at his house. He told his servant to take some of it to Shahbagh. The servant took some fish and a few other things and reached Shahbagh in the evening. Ma laughed. The spices had already been ground. The food was cooked and Yogesh Babu and many others received *prasāda*.

On another day, Ma was sitting in the grounds at Shahbagh. She got up suddenly, tidied her clothes and said, "The Rai Bahadur is coming." And sure enough, we heard the sound of the Rai Bahadur's car in a little while. I have already mentioned that such revelations of Ma's powers were very rare.

Ma often tells many people, "You must make yourself a secret box. You should not reveal anything about these experiences, you must keep them concealed. If the box overflows, let it do so, but do not pay attention to it. Keep advancing towards your aim ! Whatever may get disclosed by itself, let it happen, but do not express it

Ma's advice—the need for restraint and secrecy in matters of supernormal conditions

yourself." Ma says, "Whatever is revealed to some extent is but a stage on this path. As you advance on the path, a stage is reached when all this becomes revealed of its own accord. But the aspirant should not pay any attention to it. If he starts disclosing all this with the desire to earn fame, his progress will be arrested there. And if he refrains from watching this entertainment on the way, and keeps going towards his aim, he will see that the conditions that he had seen, cease when he enters the next stage."

Very late one night in the year 1927, Ma came to the Tikatuli house in a carriage. Soon after, she went to some other house. Observing Ma's behaviour,

Ma's strange behaviour

Father and I somehow started suspecting that Ma would go away somewhere. Meanwhile, Ma visited a few other houses and then also Jyotish Dada's near Shahbagh and said to him, "What is the necessity of *prasāda* being sent every day ? Just take a little extra *prasāda* today and keep it." And she gave him some fruits as *prasāda*. After telling him a couple of other things, she returned to Shahbagh. He also began having doubts and so he sent his servant to Shahbagh for information. Ma and Bholanath were

sitting up. Meanwhile at about 2 a.m., Father felt extremely restless. At that hour he went walking from Tikatuli to Shahbagh. The gate was closed, so he jumped over the wall and entered the compound, but some dirt was lying near the wall and his feet landed in it. He went in that condition near Ma and saw that Ma and Bholanath were conversing though it was so late in the night. Seeing Father at that time, Ma asked, "What is this? Why have you come at this odd hour?" Father replied, "Ma, all kinds of doubts assailed my mind, this is why I have come. You won't leave us and go away, will you?" Ma said, "You will surely come to know it when I go." This did not assuage the suspicion in Father's mind. Father was feeling impure as his feet were dirty and so Ma asked him to return home. Though Father had no desire to leave, he wanted to have a bath and this is why he came away. If it had not been for the misadventure, he may have stayed the night there.*

Meanwhile, Ma thought that she would leave for Narayanganj in the morning and then go elsewhere from there. Ma also decided that if she were to meet anyone on the way, she would not go. One has to pass Jyotish Dada's house to go to Narayanganj. Every day Jyotish Dada would open the door early in the morning and lie down near it. But Ma had visited him very late in the night and therefore he had not slept till the early hours of the morning. So this morning he was fast asleep. Ma did not meet anyone as she went.

* It seems necessary to mention here that Ma had ordered Father and myself to stay at our house after our return from Hardwar. Therefore we stayed at home, but spent most of our time at Shahbagh.

Father returned home around 3 or 3-30 a.m. Later in the morning he went to Shahbagh for the second time and found that Ma had left, and there was no information as to her whereabouts. Father went to Jyotish Dada's house and burst into tears. Jyotish

Ma's departure
from Dacca

Dada was also upset, but what could be done? Ma had told Father in the night, "You will receive information when I leave." To keep her word, Ma sent a message through a man from Narayanganj to Father, saying that they had gone to Narayanganj by the morning train and had proceeded elsewhere from there. Later, we gradually got the news that Ma had gone to Calcutta via Rajasahi and then to Deoghar and Vindhyaachal.

At that time there was no Ashram at Vindhyaachal. Ma stayed at a bungalow. Jiten Dada went to Deoghar with Ma from Calcutta and sent information to Varanasi that Ma had gone to Vindhyaachal from there. Receiving the information, his father (Sri Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya), his mother, Nirmal Babu and family, went to Vindhyaachal from Varanasi and had Ma's darshan. Then Ma went to Chunar and various other places and returned to Dacca.

During this time Jyotish Dada, Niranjan Babu and others began attempts to build a big Ashram for Ma. Ma said to them, "I do not need an Ashram at all. The shade of a tree is enough for me. However, if you all need it, you may build one. But

I have one thing to say. If you want to erect a building, then try to acquire the land behind the Kali temple

First attempt to
build an ashram
for Ma.

at Ramna (where the present Ashram is situated)." Later, Ma explained that in that place many renunciates who lived on fruit and air, had stayed. Ma had seen the souls of these people without their bodies at the Kali temple at Ramna. Ma said that this was the reason why Jyotish Dada and Niranjan Babu took so much trouble to buy that land. Jyotish Dada was feeling sorry that the land was not being procured even while he was sick. Later, when he got well and had still not been able to acquire the land, he went to the head priest of the Kali temple for a last attempt. He then clearly felt that Ma was by his side. That day the matter was finalised and the land was purchased.

After Ma returned from Hardwar in the Vaishakh month of the year 1927, Ma's birthday was celebrated for the first time. The celebration was for only one day (19th Vaishakh) and *kirtana* and *bhoga* were performed.

Then Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya came to our Tikatuli house to get his youngest daughter married. Ma was present during the wedding. The name of the son-in-law is Shyamakant Bandopadhyaya (of Jamshedpur). He is a staunch devotee of Ma, and later took initiation from Bholanath.

Kunja Babu's fifth son escapes snake bite by Ma's grace
After the wedding all the people stayed on at Dacca for a few days and often came to Ma.

The horoscope of Kunja Babu's fifth son indicated death due to snake-bite in the month of Sravan (August). Referring to this prediction, Manu's mother said to Ma, "Ma, if I leave this boy with you, perhaps he will be saved." Ma replied,

"It is not necessary. Take him with you." They all went to Varanasi. A few days later, probably, in the month of Sravan, Ma went out of station with Bholanath. Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya and Nirmal Babu went with their families to Vindhyaachal from Varanasi after receiving news of Ma's whereabouts from Calcutta. One day, they all went together to have darshan of Ashtabhuja Devi (a famous temple at Vindhyaachal). From there they went to Sjatakunda. On the way, at some place, Ma left everyone behind and walked a little ahead. After going a short distance, Ma turned around and raised her hand to stop everybody from proceeding further. Bholanath and others ran to Ma and saw that a venomous, brown snake was calmly staring at Ma. All got agitated when they heard that Ma had stepped on the snake. They asked if it had bitten her. Ma did not reply at all and walked on swiftly. Suddenly, Shankar, Manu's six or seven years old younger brother exclaimed to his mother, "Ma, it was written in my brother's horoscope that a snake would bite him. That is why Ma has taken it on herself." Everyone was surprised to hear such a statement from a small child. They remembered the decree of the horoscope. They reached the bungalow where Ma was staying. Ma laughed lightly and told Manu, "Manu, it was said that a snake would bite you, but it bit me instead." Ma normally hardly eats anything, but that day she ate all the *khichuri* (rice, *dal* and vegetables cooked together) that had been prepared.

Some days after Ma had left Dacca, Jyotish Dada had also come to Vindhyaachal for a change of air. He had taken a house on rent at the foot of the hill. After her meal, Ma

went to visit Jyotish Dada at his house. As soon as he heard that Ma had been bitten by a snake, he got very agitated. Without waiting to determine where Ma had been bitten, he proceeded to apply several medicines on her right foot. Ma laughed and remarked, "The left foot was bitten, and the right foot has been medicated. The medical care has been excellent. No further medicine is required." A little later, she went up the hill to her bungalow. Children were running about and playing. Ma also played with them. Afterwards, when she sat down, everybody saw two blue depressions on the sole of her foot. They asked how she had felt when she had been bitten by the snake. Ma said, "Nothing special. This foot was licked slightly, that is all."

Then Jyotish Dada went to Chunar and Ma also went to Chunar for a couple of days. Everyone felt that Jyotish Dada's

Jyotish Dada's stay at Chunar and Giridi

life had been saved by Ma's grace. Jyotish Dada prepared an imprint of Ma's feet on a stone from Chunar, and installed it on an altar in the Ashram at Dacca. A little temple has also been built around it. This imprint of Ma's feet is worshipped every day. Then Jyotish Dada went to stay at Giridi.

Ma returned to Dacca after travelling around. One day, Ma was seated in the dance hall at Shahbagh with Ngendra

Ma's return to Dacca

Babu, Niranjan Babu and others. The topic of the snake at the Ashtabuja hill was raised. Ma's eyes filled with tears. When she was asked the reason for this, Ma replied, "I am remembering that snake strongly. We shall meet again." She was asked

who that snake was, but she did not reply. Ma often says, "All questions do not always have answers. The answer just does not emerge. It seems as if the time for its revelation had not come, that is why I could not reveal it."

A few days later, Ma went to her father's house at Vidyakut. Bholanath, his youngest brother Yamini, Father, I, Virendra

Dada, Dadamahāsaya, Didimā, Makhan and Ma's visit to her father's house at Vidyakut

Ma's younger sister, all went along. We reached Vidyakut. There Dadamahāsaya has people of various castes and creeds who are like brothers to him. They all as well as other villagers came to have Ma's *darshan*. They conversed about Ma's childhood and derived great joy. Ma was taken to all the houses. It was surprising that people who were new to me were taking me for Ma's real sister. In Dacca also at first people thought I was Ma's sister. Several said that my face resembled Ma's. Even when they were told that no blood relationship existed between Ma and myself, they would not believe it. They thought I was trying to hide my relationship. And though Ma's sister was always present, no one figured that she was Ma's sister. We all laughed a great deal over this. From Vidyakut we went to the Siva temple at Natghar.

Then we all boarded a boat to see Dadamahāsaya's grandfather's place at Kheora, where Ma was born. That house

Visit to Kheora—
darshan of Ma's birthplace

had been purchased by Muslims who were living in it. They had seen Ma when she was a child. Ma started telling us all about them: Whom she had addressed as uncle and whom as grandfather; how much affection they had showered

on her. All of us requested Dadamahāsaya to show us the spot where Ma took birth. But the house had been changed so drastically, that neither he nor Didimā could point out the spot. Ma was walking here and there and looking at the plants and trees and was talking about incidents of the olden days. I saw that the birthplace could not be located in any way, so I told Ma, "Ma, do show us your birthplace, please! We have taken so much trouble to come here and have not had darshan of your birthplace at all." Ma did not say anything. A little later Ma went and stood at a place at the back of the house near a mound of cowdung. Ma picked up a handful of earth from where she was standing and began weeping loudly. Later we came to know from Ma herself that that was her birthplace. After seeing various other land-marks Didimā also remembered that that was indeed the spot of Ma's birth. Seeing Ma weep loudly, everybody got agitated. Bholanath was particularly afraid, not knowing what Ma would do next. After some time Ma became calm. She wiped her tears and, standing at the same spot, called the Muslims and told them, "Look, if you keep this spot pure, it will be for your own welfare. If you come here and pray with a pure mind, you may hope for the fulfilment of your desires. Do not ever pollute this place." The Muslims agreed. Father wanted to give them something towards preserving the spot nicely, but they refused to accept anything. They said they would keep the spot clean on their own initiative. They were feeling awed at all they were seeing. Ma reassured them saying, "You all need not have any fear, we are leaving just now." We

brought the handful of earth that Ma had picked up back home with us.

Then we went to another house for just a little, after which we took a boat back to Vidyakut. In such a short time not many people of the village had got the news of Ma's arrival. When the boat set out, we saw many people running towards us, but we did not stop. The boat halted for awhile near a house. The people ran and stood near it. A gentleman of that house used to call Didimā "Ma". When three boys born to Didimā after Ma's birth had died within six months, he had consoled Didimā. He used to love Ma as a sister. His name was Shrish Chandra and he worked at Dibrugarh. Ma had often stayed at his house during Durga Puja. Ma praised his character highly. Shrish Chandra came and stood near the boat. Ma's childhood playmate Nirmala Devi* also came. She tried to persuade Ma to alight, but Ma did not agree. After a brief halt we left for Vidyakut and reached there within two or three hours. Ma's paternal uncle's daughter-in-law was present in the house.

After staying for a few days at Vidyakut, we set out for Dacca. Just as we were leaving, Ma caught hold of her

Departure for
Dacca from
Vidyakut

uncle and began weeping bitterly. We were all stunned to see that Ma does not leave any action incomplete — even the acting of weeping while leaving the parents' home was being done to perfection. Actually there was no reason for Ma to weep, for her mother, father, brother and sister were all with her.

* Ma's name was Nirmala Sundari, that girl's name was also Nirmala. She was Ma's childhood friend. Ma's name 'Anandamayi' was given by Jyotish Dada at Dacca.

In Bholanath's family the nearest relatives had all got dispersed. The sisters had not met even one of the three brothers for several years. The youngest brother first lived with Kaliprasanna Kushari and then with the Zamindar of Muktagacha. Another brother's whereabouts were unknown for many years. So long as the eldest brother, Revati Babu, was alive, some sort of bond existed. After his death all got scattered. Ma had not even seen the youngest sister. Ma called her to Shahbagh after nineteen years — that was their first meeting. *Pisima* (Kaliprasanna Kushari's wife) used to say, "We were just scattered — this daughter-in-law (Ma) is bringing us together." All the brothers and sisters had gathered in Dacca only because of Ma. That day while leaving Vidyakut, Ma was crying as if she were a little girl. Ma had also mentioned that formerly she used to be afraid of even speaking to that uncle. The uncle, too, was stroking Ma and trying to pacify her. The result was that seeing Ma cry all the relatives who were present also began to weep. Ma got on to the boat. She wiped her eyes and was laughing away. We got on to the boat and laughed heartily, seeing Ma's sport. Virendra Dada commented, "Ma would not come away without making everyone weep. So she cried herself and made all the people cry too."

We had to go by boat till Naveengarh and from there by steamer. Ma was seated near one edge of the boat, Virendra Dada sat at one end and I at the other end. The boat was sailing fast in the middle of the river when suddenly we saw a snake coming towards the boat from a great distance. I looked at Ma and saw that she was also staring

at the snake. The snake, too, was coming straight towards Ma. Ma was sitting very still for a long time. She had seen the snake much before us. We saw it only after it had come a little nearer. Surprisingly, though the boat was sailing so fast, the snake did not swerve from its path but came straight to Ma, who was seated at the edge of the boat.

Darsan of a great soul in the form of a snake in the path of the boat

The snake now began climbing into the boat from that side. Ma was sitting quite still. The snake was about to touch her body when we jumped up. The boatsman also saw the snake climbing in and struck at it with the oar. But the snake went under the boat. Ma's body was drenched with the water that splashed on her, but she kept absolutely quiet. We asked her to change her clothes, but Ma would not do so, she sat with the wet clothes on and let them dry on her body. It struck us then that Ma had said, "My eyes are filled with tears because I am remembering the snake at Ashtabhuja. We shall meet again." Virendra Dada asked Ma again and again, "Ma, who was it who had come in the guise of a snake?" Ma kept quiet at first, then she started saying, "I saw two great souls seated in space, quite a few arm lengths above the ground. One was the Guru and the other the disciple. The disciple was standing." Then she said no more. We all guessed that perhaps this was the reply to the query as to who the snake was. May be some great soul had come near Ma in the form of a snake? Ma said once more, "We shall meet again." We returned to Dacca.

Many days later, Ma went to Niranjan Babu's house for kirtan. She was lying on the floor in a room on the second

storey. Suddenly Ma felt that a snake was near her feet, but she did not say anything then. Later, when she was descending the stairs to go for kirtan, she

Ma sees a snake in Niranjan Babu's house

stepped on the snake. Bholanath was behind her. Ma pushed him aside. Everyone ran forward to kill the snake. But Ma said, "If you are able to, you may kill it." The staircase ended on a big veranda, which was a clean, open place. The whole house was also well illuminated, but no one could see where the snake had gone from the stairs. Ma went and sat for the kirtan. Whenever Ma says, "Snake, a snake is in my *kheyāla*!" we have observed that within a couple of days, Ma sees a snake. Ma alone knows what connection she has with snakes. On the land which Ma had asked to be acquired in Ramna (where the present Ashram is situated), there were very big snakes. Once a huge white snake had been spotted. I have heard that when Ma used to send milk and bananas with Pratul, she once stood with her feet on a pit and said to him, "You must come here and offer milk and bananas. Have no fear." Satya Babu of Baksi bazar in Dacca and his wife were coming to Ma since a long time. They also offered milk and bananas for a few days.

Every time Ma went to Calcutta she was taken to Pyaribaru's house, and kirtan was performed. Pyaribaru has only one daughter and one son. On the occasion of their weddings in 1927 she called Ma to Calcutta. Bholanath, Father and I went along with Ma. Pyaribaru made Ma attend the weddings. The bride and bridegroom bowed before Ma before

entering the wedding hall. Both weddings took place at the same time in two houses. Pyaribaru made Ma sit next to the wedding dais in both houses. From a superficial standpoint, Bholanath was just an employee in Pyaribaru's gardens, but she just did not regard him that way. She revered them greatly. She made Ma stay on in Calcutta for several days after the weddings and called Ma to her house every day.

A family feud existed between Pyaribaru and her relatives. One day she told Ma, "My mother-in-law never comes here. This time she has come here by your grace. A terrible fight is going on amongst us all. We believe that if you are present, everything will sort out. Therefore tomorrow we are all going to sit near you and thrash out the family differences in detail." They did so. They made Ma sit near them when they all gathered together. Surprisingly enough, the differences of several years were wiped out. I was also present. They told Ma, "It was only by your grace that we have found this solution. You must not leave our gardens and go elsewhere." Pyaribaru never went to Dacca because her mother-in-law stayed there. That day it was decided that everyone would go to Dacca. They said they would go to meet Ma there. It is not a very ordinary feature that Kali Puja was being performed in a Muslim's garden. This was possible only because of Pyaribaru's devotion for Ma. Of course, Rai Bahadur Yogesh was also responsible. We returned to Dacca with Ma.

The elder daughter of the late Chittaranjan Das, Aparna Devi, was invited to the weddings of Pyaribaru's son and

Ma's visit to Calcutta for the weddings of Pyaribaru's son and daughter

daughter. When she saw Ma with a red bordered sari and a big red mark on her forehead, Aparna Devi was reminded of a dream which her mother Vasanti Devi had had a long time ago. Before she became a widow, Vasanti Devi had once had a dream in which she saw a lady with a red bordered sari and a *sindur tilak* saying, "Be careful. A great calamity is going to befall you." As soon as Aparna Devi remembered this dream, she sent a message to Vasanti Devi about Ma. One day, Vasanti Devi came to see Ma during kirtan at Pyaribaru's house. She stared at Ma for a very long time. When she was questioned by everybody, she said, "It happened very long ago. I cannot remember properly. Yet it seems as if I saw this form in my dream."* Then she also asked Aparna Devi to sing kirtan for Ma and she herself took Ma in her lap. Vasanti Devi came to Ma several times later with Das Matā's sister Urmila Devi. Vasanti Devi as well as Aparna Devi also took Ma to their houses. All three ladies had great devotion for Ma.

A few days later Pyaribaru went to Dacca to her mother-in-law's place with her son, daughter-in-law, daughter and son-in-law. One day she had expressed the desire to eat food cooked by Ma, so she was invited to do so. Ma cooked most of the meal with her own hands. Matari *Pitimi* and I helped her. Pyaribaru sat under a tree and ate off a leaf plate with great joy. I served the food. Ma sat close by. Pyaribaru's child-

Pyaribaru's visit to Dacca

* A few days before the death of the late Chittaranjan Das, Ma saw a photograph of him and his wife and remarked, "A mountain of trouble is imminent for the lady. She will become a widow soon." Ma did not know her then.

ren heard about the number of items that had been prepared. They laughed and said, "We do not eat such a variety of dishes even in our grandmother's house. But here so many kinds of items have been prepared." Everyone ate with great relish. I have always been stating that whatever Ma does is perfect in every way. She was feeding all the members of the Nawab's household and no shortcoming was to be detected even in that. Pyaribaru offered a gold necklace to the Kali image with her own hands. After a few days they all returned to Calcutta.

It was decided that Ma would go to Gauhati. On her way to the Kumbha Mela, Ma had met Munsif Dinesh Chandra Rai at Calcutta, where he was staying Pilgrimage to Kamakhya in 1927 with his family. A few days earlier he had lost his young son who had been studying for B.A. in Presidency College along with Nandu. Nandu had brought the bereaved parents to meet Ma. They got much consolation from their darshan of Ma. After that they came during some holidays to Dacca and stayed in a rented house there in order to obtain Ma's company. At that time they started requesting Ma to go to Ferozepur. Girija Shankar's house is in the Vaisari village of Vaishal — he also wanted to take Ma to his house once. Ma took us all with her in 1927 for Gauhati Kamakhya darshan. It was decided that we would not return directly to Dacca from Gauhati, but go to Darjeeling, Ferozepur and Vaisari on the way back. Bholanath, Father and I went with Ma. Virendra Dada also came along. While ascending the Kamakhya mountain, Ma climbed very swiftly

at first, but after awhile she could not proceed because of the change in the atmosphere. We helped her and pulled her up somehow or other. Atop the mountain we found that Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya from Varanasi had arrived. Nirmal Babu had not come, but his wife had. Within a few days, Dadamahāśaya, who was staying at Surendra Mukhopadhyaya's house in Calcutta, Surendra Babu, Chandi Babu (Rai Bahadur's youngest son) and many others arrived from Calcutta. Bliss permeated the surroundings. We had darshan of Kamakhya Devi.

One night Ma went outside. She saw that the mountain was enveloping the four quarters with purity. She felt as if the impact of this purity was radiating all around. She saw Rama, Krishna and any number of other Gods and Goddesses running about and playing. They were all in their childhood. Ma also saw many Rishis and Munis who had long matted locks and beards and some who were still children. They all rejoiced in Ma's presence. There were so many gods, sages and saints that the mountain was hardly visible. Ma came into the room quickly. At that time Ma did not say anything, later she described everything. I said that descriptions of children who were seers *bālakhilya** (ṛiṣis) were to be found in the Rāmā�ana and Mahābhārata. Those seers were all children who had performed severe penances. Ma remarked, "They might have been the same I have never heard the story, but they were all more or less like that. See, what an effect the place had at

*Translator's note: *Bālakhilya* — a class of divine personages of the size of a thumb and produced from the Creator's body and said to precede the sun's chariot (their number is said to be sixty thousand).

that time. Nirmal Babu's wife was with me. She did not see anything, but the hair on her entire body stood on end due to fear, though she could not tell the reason for her fear." During the *pūjā* also several little boys and girls had come near Ma.

One night, at Kamakhya, Ma and Bhulanath were lying down while we were all seated. Ma was talking about the early days at Ashtagram and Bajitpur and how she used to manage her household. Father was sitting in a room, doing his *pūjā* the whole night through. Conversing with Ma all night, we realised it was daybreak. Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya suddenly said, "I had resolved to speak to Ma about my spiritual practices, but it was impossible. The night was spent in useless chatter." Ma immediately remarked, "You people speak about any number of topics. It seems as if that is not a waste of time. Only the talk about my householderhood is, it appears." Everyone felt that Ma said this just to teach us a lesson. Every anecdote about Ma is as venerable to us as a mantra. Realising that we tend to forget this, Ma reminded us about it, all by way of speaking jokingly. Can a topic which purifies the mind be considered useless? Particularly anecdotes from Ma's earlier life and incidents that occurred in Ma's younger days are extremely sanctifying. We all do not know which subjects are useful and which are useless. Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya understood the significance of Ma's remark, and realising his mistake, he felt deeply ashamed.

At Kamakhya, Bhulanath was going to worship Ma one day, and all necessary arrangements had been made. Ma was

seated and Bholanath was performing the *pūjā* when suddenly Ma went into *samādhi*. She remained seated thus for a very long time. A spot next to the red mark on Ma's forehead looked extremely white. All those present saw it. The group of people from Calcutta had not arrived at that time. The room in which the *pūjā* was performed was situated next to a big veranda. The veranda was at quite a height. A goat was sacrificed below the veranda, some distance away. Bholanath performed the sacrifice. By chance, Father held the goat after the sacrifice in such a way that he was bathed in the blood. When Ma came out of *samādhi*, she said, "I could make out clearly that drops of blood from the sacrificial goat fell on my body." All were astonished to hear this statement, for normally the blood could not have splashed that far at all. Food was offered. The Calcutta group arrived after the *pūjā*. Ma wandered about joyfully in the mountains for a few days.

Then Ma left for Ferozepur. Since Ma's arrival at Ferozepur had got delayed, Dinesh Babu sent a telegram saying that he had to leave on transfer and could not stay any longer. But he requested Ma to give darshan to all the people at Ferozepur. Girija Babu, Subodh and Sitanath from Dacca were awaiting Ma at Ferozepur. We reached Ferozepur in 1928. After alighting from the steamer one has to go a short way by boat. As the boat neared the shore, extremely melodious strains of kirtan could be heard. Ma went into *bhāva*. When the boat touched the shore, we could see many people coming towards us, singing kirtan. All had flower garlands and sandal paste with them. Ma was held

and helped to get up and her sari was tied around her waist. They decorated Ma with the garlands and anointed her with sandal paste. Then they garlanded everybody and applied sandal paste to their foreheads. Ma's eyes were half closed and it seemed as if she had left her body. Her hair was hanging loosely. The sari was wrapped around her body and waist and she wore a blouse. In this condition, she walked with the kirtan singers, swaying from side to side. Seeing Ma's countenance everyone became intoxicated. They were all gazing at Ma and becoming engrossed in bliss and singing kirtan. We went to the place where Ma was to stay. Ma sat down as soon as she reached there. All the people began going round and round while singing kirtan. They had heard all about Ma from Dinesh Babu. A little later food was offered. Ma could not eat anything as she was in *bhāva*. Ma stayed there for two days and kirtan was continued almost without a break. We heard that every single person of Ferozepur had come to Ma. Only one old lady who was unable to walk, had been left behind, so Ma was taken to meet her.

From Ferozepur Girija Babu took Ma to his house at Varanasi. There Ma had intense *bhāva* and a lot of kirtan was performed throughout the whole day and after Ma at Vaisari it was stopped for awhile in the night a food offering was made. Many people received *prasāda*. Girija Babu's old mother, his wife and children were all present at his house. Ma's arrival had been delayed and Girija Babu and others had given up all hope of Ma's going there at all. One morning Girija Babu's mother woke up and declared, "I have had a dream wherein Kali and Manasa Mātā were arriving,

Go to Ferozepur, Ma is surely coming." Ma reached Ferozepur after Girija Babu had arrived there. We stayed at Girija Babu's house for three days. He made an Ashram at the spot where Ma had *bhāva*. From Girija Babu's house, Dr. Virendra took Ma to his house. There also a lot of kirtan was performed and many people received *prasāda*. Dr. Virendra had met Ma at Girija Babu's house.

From Dr. Virendra's house we went to Sohagdal. Ma travelled from one village to the other partly by boat and partly ^{Sohagdal village} on foot. She was accompanied by many people who sang kirtan all along. Nobody wanted to leave Ma. Old and young alike had gathered together and were singing *kirtana* with the hope that if *kirtana* was kept up continuously, Ma would not be able to go away. Ma told Father one day, "We shall leave today. Make arrangements for our departure." Father fixed up a boat. In the afternoon Ma left with all the people. As soon as Ma got into the boat, she went into *samādhi*.

From there we all went to Pisimā's house at Calcutta, Salkia. Then we went to Rajashahi and reached Dacca with Ma

Return to Dacca via Salkia and Rajashahi via Calcutta. In all the villages Ma had visited several homes. Each one wanted Ma to bless and purify his home. In many houses, in an enclosed area an *āsana* is kept for Goddess

Lakshmi or for Radha Krishna. Ma went to those *āsanās* and picked out the sugar puffs and betel leaves from there and ate them. All regarded Ma as the Goddess Herself and therefore no one hesitated to give her the sugar puffs and betel leaves from the *āsanās*. In this way Ma performed various kinds of

līlā and reached Dacca. Ever since Ma had gone out to Devghar, she has never stayed in Dacca for even a year at a stretch.

CHAPTER VI

For a few days Ma's dietary regulations were such that she had to be fed whatever would stick to the hand at one time.

New regulations in diet It had to be picked up or kept and fed to her with the right hand. She would not eat anything other than this. I would do whatever

was instructed. One day in Calcutta, I fed her the same way at Pramatha Nath's house. For some days she would not eat from any vessel. It was necessary to clean the floor meticulously and then feed Ma off the floor. One day in reply to some remark from Bholanath, Ma said, "I shall not eat from a bell-metal vessel." She also said she would not eat from a brass vessel. Bholanath jokingly asked, "If you will not eat from any of these, then will you eat from silver vessels?" Ma's reply came pat, "You have spoken correctly. If a silver vessel is available, I shall be able to eat from it. But I am telling you, neither get a silver vessel made for me, nor mention this to anybody." Surprisingly, within a day or two Jyotish Dada sent a silver bowl with some *sundesh* (a sweet made from cottage cheese) in it. A few days later Father also presented Ma a silver bowl. We all had a good laugh over this. For some time, Ma ate from a silver vessel. Even if food was prepared in a bell-metal vessel by mistake, her eating would stop immediately. Her bodily condition also would undergo a terrible change. After many days this regulation was broken.

Pramatha Nath himself described how once a doubt assailed him regarding Ma. He decided that if Ma revealed to him the

Revelation of a divine form to Pramatha Nath and his peon

form of the goddess he was contemplating, his doubt would be cleared. He did not say anything about this to anyone. That very evening, Ma, Bholanath and Pramatha Nath went to Siddheshwari. Ma used to go there sometimes. That day Ma sat on the veranda of the Kali temple. It was very late in the night. Ma's returning was not certain. Bholanath fell asleep where he was lying on the veranda. Pramatha Nath was sitting and performing *japa*. Ma used to have a long veil over her head during those days. Often her face could not be seen. Ma was seated just like that. After a long time it became silent all around. Suddenly Ma stood up. The cloth slipped from her head. Her head bent backwards and touched her back. Her hair came loose. I do not know what happened. Pramatha Nath had thought of a headless form of the goddess that day. He saw that very form manifested in Ma's body and he was breathless with amazement. He threw himself on the ground and prostrated before Ma. Within a moment Ma sat in her normal form again. When Bholanath woke up all returned to Shahbagh, Pramatha Nath went home. That day he was accompanied by his peon, who had also witnessed all that had occurred. The peon said to Pramatha Nath, "Babu Mahāsaya, I saw the form of *Data Mahavidyā* in Ma's person." Pramatha Nath embraced him and declared, "You are even more fortunate than I am, because I saw only one form and you saw ten!" Father heard of this incident from Pramatha Nath himself.

Balananda Swamiji of Deoghar once told Father, "Do not ever leave the company of Ma which you have found. Ma is Balananda Swami's opinion: Ma is an eternal *siddha* not a spiritual aspirant. She is an eternal *siddha*, she has taken birth only for some work. As soon as that work is accomplished, she will go away. She does not need to perform any kind of spiritual practice or prayer." He said many more such things about Ma, but Ma moves about in such an ordinary way, we completely forget all these things. Though we see one remarkable incident after the other, we forget everything later on.

Once, in the afternoon of Sivarātri day, Ma took Bholanath, Father, Virendra Dada, Nandu, Maroni and myself to Siddheshwari. On reaching there, Ma went and sat in the pit. A little later, Ma got up and asked Bholanath to sit there. As soon as he sat down, Ma went and sat on his knee, and made Maroni sit on the other knee. Then Ma asked Father to sit on her lap. He did so. Father was then asked to get up and Ma made Virendra Dada sit on her lap. Subsequently Virendra Dada was made to get up and I was asked to sit, then after Ma made me get up, Nandu was asked to sit on her lap. Then everybody got up. This *lilā* was performed secretly. Nobody else knew anything about it. After staying there for awhile we returned to Shahbagh.

In October 1927, while Ma was staying at Shahbagh, Durga *pūjā* was celebrated at our house at Tikatuli. It was a *pūjā* performed through generations in our family and so all our

nearest relatives had gathered. Many devotees of Ma also came. Several people arrived from Calcutta and assembled at the Tikatuli house. Ma and Bholanath went there on the *sapti* day. Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya had come with his family from Kashi. His friend, Dr. Upendranath Bando-

padhyaya of Mirzapur, who was a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, had heard about Ma and had come with Kunja Babu for Ma's darshan. He had also brought his wife along. The same priest who had performed the *Vasanti Pūjā*, came to celebrate the Durga *Pūjā*, but he was having severe pain in his legs. Ma said, "It is not right to do the *pūjā* in this way. It is proper to perform one's own *pūjā* oneself. When you cannot do it yourself, the priest is made to do it. Baba (Father) himself should do the *pūjā*." Since Father was the eldest of his brothers, by Ma's orders it was decided that the priest would chant all the mantras and Father would perform the *pūjā*. No one had ever before seen such a thing happen. Father sat down to do the *pūjā*. Ma occupied one corner of the room. Father took the dust off Ma's feet and her blessings before starting the worship. Ma was to sit in that room for as long as the *pūjā* was in progress. Father performed the *pūjā* and all the others handed to him the necessary items. Sri Surendra Mohan Mukhopadhyaya is Father's paternal uncle's son, therefore this *pūjā* was also his paternal family's tradition. So he had come with his family. Charu Babu, Ananta Babu and Chandi Babu were also present. Ma used to call these five people the *Pancha Pandava* (the five *Pāndava* brothers of the *Mahābhārata*). Once these five took Ma to Shahbagh and worshipped her.

Family Durga *Pūjā* by Father at the Tikatuli house in 1927

Arrangements had been made to sacrifice a goat during the Durga Puja. On the *saptami* day, the sacrifice was performed without impediment. Three sacrifices used to be performed on three days — this was the traditional procedure followed by our ancestors. Since a long time, a special animal sacrifice was performed for the welfare of Father, on the *astami* day. Surendra Mohan Mukhopadhyaya was to perform the goat sacrifice. On the *astami* day, after the goat had been consecrated he went with the sword and prostrated before Ma. Again after the sword was consecrated, he placed it on the ground and prostrated before Ma prior to entering the room where the sacrifice was to be performed. Arrangements had been made to sacrifice the goat in a room adjoining the one in which the worship was going on, so that the sacrifice was done in front of the image. Meanwhile Ma was seated in one corner of the *puja* room, facing the image. The room for the sacrifice was behind Ma's back. The spot where the goat was to be sacrificed just could not be seen from where Ma was seated, especially because Ma was facing the image. But just as the sword was lifted to sacrifice the goat, Ma stood up suddenly. As soon as Ma went and stood at the doorway between the two rooms, the sword fell on the goat but the goat was not cut. Realising this, all the ladies began shouting, "Ma, Ma". A terrific consternation was set up in the house, because everybody believed this to be a bad omen. But Ma stood steady just as she was — an unshakable, peaceful and blissful form.

Bholanath got greatly upset. He wondered why this incident had occurred in the midst of such happiness. He imme-

diately made a ritualistic offering (*anjali*) at the feet of the image and taking the sword from Surendra Mukhopadhyaya, he got ready to sacrifice the goat. Surendra Mukhopadhyaya stood staring at Ma. Bholanath asked Virendra Dada to bring the goat. It was brought and the sacrifice was performed. The goat to be offered for Father's welfare was also to be sacrificed at that time. That stake had also been buried. Just as Bholanath lifted the sword to sacrifice the goat Ma went running to the goat, kept her hand on its neck and sat down. Laughingly she said, "You will not be able to slaughter the goat without cutting my hand." Bholanath lowered the sword. The goat was picked up. Ma was asked what was to be done with the goat. Ma replied that it was to be released in the field in Ramna where the previous goat had been released and just as at that time, she again stroked the whole body of the goat with her feet. She also issued an order there and then, "The special sacrifice that was offered for Father's welfare every year will not be given henceforth." Further she went on, "About the goat sacrifice during the traditional Durga Puja in your family, you can ask your family Guru. If he allows it, that may also be stopped." Ever since, the sacrifice performed for Father's welfare was discontinued. But the sacrifice during the family's traditional worship is still going on by the family Guru's injunction.

That day when all the men, women and children who had gathered to see the *puja* were upset over the incident during the sacrifice, and were calling out, 'Ma, Ma', Ma herself did not show the least perturbation even for a second. Not the slightest change was perceptible in her countenance. Such was

Ma's bearing that even those who did not have much faith in Ma were spell-bound with wonder. They also admitted that they had never seen such tranquillity anywhere. In fact, even if we do not believe anything else, just the peaceful, steady and blissful nature of Ma under all circumstances is enough to make her worthy of worship by the world. Humanity cannot but bow down before such a nature.

In this way, Ma stopped two goats from being sacrificed on two occasions. Ma said, "The sacrifice has been completed when the consecration is done."

The house at Siddheshwari was old. Many people were of the opinion that an *ashram* ought to be constructed for Ma,

Construction of a big room at Siddheshwari
because it was sometimes difficult for everyone to gather at the gardens where Ma lived. Already some objections were being raised by Pyaribanu and others. Therefore it was

decided to build a proper room at Siddheshwari. Before this, the room that had been made by Ma's orders at Siddheshwari had walls of mud and a thatched roof of straw. It was now decided unanimously, that a large room was to be constructed. Father took the initiative and accepted the responsibility. Ma had all the available land enclosed in order to build a big room. Later, other people got together and paid for about half the construction, the other half was given by Father. That is Ma's first *ashram*. The room still stands. This time when the room was being built, Ma said in connection with the particular *asana*, "This spot was like a pit so long. But now I see that no one will be able to protect this spot any longer." Having

said this, she gave instructions as to what kind of an altar was to be made there, with the measurements of her body. An altar of such specifications was constructed.

After a few days, Ma again went out of station. She said that she would not take us along. She was to go with

Ma leaves Dacca — trip to Giridi, Chunar and Vindhya
Bholanath, Maroni and Nandu. We always used to be with Ma and hence we found this very difficult, but Ma consoled us and left for Calcutta. Sri Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya

and family arrived there from Varanasi and enjoyed Ma's company. They all proceeded to Giridi. From there they went for a darshan of Pareshnath and stayed on for a few days, before returning to Calcutta. Sri Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya and family left for Varanasi from Calcutta, while Ma went with her companions to Chunar, Mirzapur and Vindhya. There was no ashram at Vindhya then, Ma stayed in a bungalow belonging to some Marwaris. Every evening, Dr. Upendranath Bandopadhyaya used to visit Ma at Ashtabhuja hill and return in the morning. Ma, Bholanath and Nandu would do the cooking and other jobs together and manage. A few days later Nirmal Babu and family went to have darshan of the Goddess at Vindhya. There they heard about Ma's arrival and went to meet Ma at the Ashtabhuja hill. After some days, Nandu left for Calcutta, while Ma stayed for a few days at Vindhya and then went to Calcutta with her party. There she put up at Surendra Mukhopadhyaya's house and spread bliss all around. Surendra Babu, Chandi Baba and others accompanied Ma to Tarakeshwar.

Then Ma also went to Navadvip. Ma and Bholanath visited Jaipur and Bharatpur for a couple of days during this trip.

When Ma was leaving Shahbagh for this journey, Prafulla Babu's wife jokingly told Ma, "You must return as soon as possible. If you delay, we shall not let you

Necessity of being enter Shahbagh — we shall close the door
careful in speech 1927 Ma also laughed and replied, "Is that so?"

That is fine then." Bholanath reprimanded Prafulla Babu's wife for having said such a thing. She had of course said it in a well-meaning way, but the words uttered by her turned out to be prophetic. The owners handed over Shahbagh to a court of ward, Bholanath, Yogesh Babu and Bhoodev Babu all lost their jobs. Ma never went to Shahbagh again. That is the reason why Ma often says, "It is better to be careful while speaking, for sometimes good and bad utterances turn out to come true."

Munsif Dinesh was in Tangail. Ma had been there on her way during this trip. Meanwhile the Muslims in the Nawab's household were quarrelling amongst themselves. The image of Kali was still in the garden and Kulada Dada was going there to perform the worship every day. Matari Pisimā, Dadamahākaya, Didimā, Makhan, Amulya and others were also staying in the garden. Kamalakant stayed there as well because he was putting a garland of hibiscus flowers on the image of Kali every day. One day he missed garlanding the image and Ma came to know of it. She asked for information about this by having a letter sent to him and we found out that he had actually forgotten to offer the garland that day.

A house was taken on hire in Dacca, and the image of Kali was brought there. The persons who were still at Shahbagh all went to live in that house. Virendra Maharaj stayed at Shahbagh for a few days and then went elsewhere. Since the image

The shifting of the image of Kali in 1927
had been made of mud so long ago, everyone feared that some limb of the image might break as soon as it was lifted. But no alternative was to be found and the image had to be shifted. Yogesh Babu, Surendra Babu and others lifted the image and took it in a car to Tikatuli. The image was not damaged in any way.

Ma's entry into the rented house at Tikatuli— Vaishakh 1928
The room at Siddheshwari was ready. It was decided that Ma's birthday would be celebrated there and the date drew near. Ma went to the rented house at

Tikatuli in the Vaishakh month of 1928, on her return from Calcutta. Jyotish Dada had also come with her. Niranjan Babu's wife was very sick, she was suffering from dysentery. Ma first went to her house as soon as she returned, and after her meal she went to Tikatuli. Shahbagh had been given to a court of ward and consequently Bholanath and Rai Bahadur Yogesh had lost their jobs. The Rai Bahadur's entire family pleaded with Ma a great deal about the job, but Ma said, "Do not get upset. Everything is for the best" And finally they all truly realised how much good accrued to them by Ma's grace because of the loss of the job. Even after this, Pyaribanu and her son-in-law wished to take Ma with them, but Rai Bahadur Yogesh thought it was not proper to go there again. There-

fore they did not let Ma go. This time in Dacca, Ma noticed that the health of the wife of Rai Bahadur's son Prafulla was very bad. Prafulla's wife had kept Ma's photograph near her pillow. A little after arriving at the Tikatuli house, Ma went to see her and stayed there for a very long time. While coming away, she gave the shawl she was wearing to the patient. After a few days, Prafulla's wife recovered gradually.

In the Vaishakh month of 1928, Ma's birthday celebrations were begun in Siddheshwari.* Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya and Nirmal Babu had arrived with

The celebration of Ma's birthday in Siddheshwari for the first time—
Vaishakh (May) 1928

their families. Ma took Bholanath and all the others and went to Siddheshwari. This time it was decided that *akhanda nāma kirtana* (continuous singing of God's name) would be

held on all the days till the birthday, and that on Ma's birthday, Bholanath himself would worship Ma. The celebration was begun on the 19th of Vaishakh. The room at Siddheshwari being very spacious, *pālā-kirtana* (ballad-kirtan) was also going on inside. Chintsharan Bandopadhyaya and many others were singing kirtan about the renunciation of Nimai, the breaking of pride, Mathur, and other ballads, making the audience laugh and weep alternately. The rendering of the ballad about the renunciation of Nimai made everyone cry bitterly. Ma was sitting composedly and listening to

* In the Vaishakh month of 1926, Ma had been offered food at our house in Tikatul one day. In course of conversation we heard from Ma, that that day (19th Vaishakh) was the date of her advent. We all said, "It is good that a food offering is being made here today. The next year 1927, Jyotish Dada and others celebrated Ma's birthday on that day, after making all arrangements. This is the history behind Ma's birthday celebrations.

the singing. Meanwhile food was being cooked to be offered and lots of people were to receive *prasāda*. On Ma's birthday, by about ten o'clock at night, Ma lay down on Didimā's lap. Ma had taken a flower from the garland round her neck and kept it in her hand as soon as the night began. Even when she lay down she kept holding the flower in her hand. She was lying in Didimā's lap with her eyes closed and we all saw that her hand went towards Didimā's feet gradually, her body remained lying down, her hand opened and the flower fell at Didimā's feet. Then Ma was unable to lift her hand. After awhile, Ma was raised and taken to the spot where the *pūjā* was to be performed and Ma lay down there again.

Bholanath worshipped Ma with the sixteen types of offerings (*sodasopacāra*). Everyone watched the wonderful scene with devout attention. The *pūjā* went on until daybreak. Then the kirtan was to be stopped, but Ma was lying down and so the kirtan continued. With much difficulty Ma was roused after a long time. She got up and gradually recovered to some extent and was watching the celebrations smilingly. Dadamahāśaya was also singing kirtan. Ma called him. She took the garland from her neck and put it round his, prostrating on the ground before him. But once she lay down at his feet she could not get up. She was raised with great difficulty. Whenever Ma did anything, she put her entire body, mind and soul into it. Dadamahāśaya began dancing as he sang with the garland round his neck — "Harinamer mālā Nitāi dilo amār gole, Harinām mantra dilo, snān korāye Ganga jole" (Nitai put the garland of God's name around my neck, initiated me with Hari's Name and bathed me in Ganga water)

During that celebration, Baul decorated Ma with flowers, covering her whole body. On her head he placed a crown of flowers, her hands and feet were adorned with floral jewelry and round her neck were placed floral garlands. What a wonderful kind of decor! After some time Ma removed everything. We have seen that if anyone touches Ma's feet for a long time or worships her in a special way or decorates her in such a manner, Ma goes into *samādhi*.

In this way the celebrations were completed. All the people went to the rented house at Tikatuh. The Bhairavi of the Kali temple used to light the lamps in the room at Siddheshwari.

I have forgotten to write about one incident. While Ma was staying at Shahbagh, kirtan was going on one day and Ma was in *bhāva*. On that occasion she was moving round and round as if she were circumambulating the kirtan. Her eyes and face were sparkling with a supernatural glow, it seemed as though lightning was flashing from her entire countenance. Ma suddenly went out of the kirtan room, crossed the garden very swiftly and reached the big grave of the fakir. A Muslim gentleman had come that day to have Ma's *darshan*. All the people ran behind Ma with lights. As soon as Ma lightly touched the Muslim gentleman's back and indicated to him that she wanted him to go along, he went with her and opened the door of the graveyard. Ma went inside and walked around and began reciting passages from the *Korān* in a high pitched voice. We had never heard Ma speak in

Ma's recitation
of the *Korān*
and performance
of *namaz*

were sparkling with a supernatural glow, it seemed as though lightning was flashing from her entire countenance. Ma suddenly went out of the kirtan room, crossed the garden very swiftly and reached the big grave of the fakir. A Muslim gentleman had come that day to have Ma's *darshan*. All the people ran behind Ma with lights. As soon as Ma lightly touched the Muslim gentleman's back and indicated to him that she wanted him to go along, he went with her and opened the door of the graveyard. Ma went inside and walked around and began reciting passages from the *Korān* in a high pitched voice. We had never heard Ma speak in

such a loud tone before. However, during the kirtan on Pausha Sankranti day, Ma had sung 'Hare Murārē' at a very high pitch also. She was now reciting the text of the *Korān* very distinctly. The Muslim gentleman stood with bowed head. All present were stunned, wondering where Ma had learnt these stanzas from the *Korān*. Then Ma started performing the *namāz* just as Muslims do. Usually during *namaz* Muslims get up once, sit, bow down and raise their hands in order to follow the regulations laid down. Ma was also doing all this but she was performing it with a total involvement of every part and limb of her body. The Muslim gentleman also did the *namāz*. But Ma showed how these rituals are to be performed with complete dedication of the entire body, mind and soul. Later, Ma also explained to some extent as to how each limb has to be moved. Ma said, "This has a very beautiful significance. But usually no one knows it. All do it just to follow regulations." In connection with the language of the *Korān*, Ma said, "I cannot do anything by my own will. I noticed that all this emanated from within, by itself. The language, the tone, everything occurred by itself. Then the meaning of all this and what all this is, is revealed within. It is not always revealed to you all. But whatever happens, its meaning is disclosed within straight away." Then Ma went out of the grave yard.

She returned to the kirtan room. *Prasāda* was distributed, the Muslim gentleman also took some *prasāda*. He wanted to feed Ma something with his own hands. Ma agreed, he put some sugar puffs into Ma's mouth and Ma accepted them.

Pyaribanu and others heard of this incident. Later when they came to Dacca, they took Ma to the graveyard and began requesting her to recite the Koran. But though everyone beseeched her, the Koran was not recited again. That day no verse emanated from Ma's mouth. Ma sat quietly for a long time. When Ma stood up, suddenly some words were uttered which we could not understand. The people of the Nawab's house said that Ma was quoting from some part of the Koran. But that day the kind of speech that had poured forth on the former occasion did not recur. Only very few lines were uttered.

It had already been decided that after the birthday celebrations at Siddheshwari, Ma would go to Dinesh Babu's house at Tangail. Ma went there accompanied by Bholanath and Jyotish Dada. Due to some reason we could not go with Ma to Tangail.

Ma's visit to Tangail
After spending a couple of days there Ma came back to Dacca. As soon as Ma returned, we received a letter from Dinesh Babu in which he expressed regret that we had been unable to accompany Ma to his place. He wrote: "Kirtan was performed here one day and Ma went into *bhāva*. Many people were trying to protect Ma's body, but inspite of it Ma's body fell to the ground again and again. When Ma came back to normal to some extent we asked her, 'Ma, when you are in *bhāva*, only Khukuni is able to protect your body? Today Khukuni is not present, and though so many others were here, your body received so many injuries. What is the reason for this?' Ma replied tenderly, 'Everyone cannot understand this.'"

Reading this letter and the few words spoken by Ma, I was overwhelmed with gratitude.

In June 1928, as soon as Ma left for Tangail, a house was rented near the Dhakeshwari temple, and the image of Kali was installed there. This was the third time that the image was being shifted. It was decided that Ma would stay there and so Ma got off at that house on her return. The building had a room upstairs. A few days after Ma had been staying in that house, Suryakant Babu, a zamindar of Dacca, came with his family to see Ma. They were very sorrowful about their separation from their sons at that time. They derived much peace from Ma's darshan and from worshipping her. Ma said, "I am your child." They also felt very happy when they embraced Ma. They stayed for a few days and returned to Calcutta.

Meanwhile Niranjan Babu's wife's condition was not at all satisfactory. She had a desire to have Ma's darshan every day. So Niranjan Babu would take Ma to his house daily. Once Virendra Dada also went with Ma. He was very sad when he saw Niranjan Babu's wife. In the evening Ma was sitting in the room upstairs with her eyes closed. Several people were also sitting there. They too were very quiet. I have already mentioned that often Ma looks up towards the sky and sits absolutely still like a rock especially during evening time. All those present would sit still as well, so also that day everyone was still. With his eyes shut Virendra Dada was praying fervently to Ma in his mind to save Niranjan Babu's wife, be-

cause she was suffering acutely from dysentry. A little later, Ma opened her eyes and looking around, she said, "Who is calling me?" Vrendra Dada understood that Ma had heard his heartfelt prayer. He immediately joined his palms and said, "Ma, I was calling. Save Niranjan Babu's wife!" Ma glanced at him fleetingly and then resumed her position as before with her eyes shut. A few days later Niranjan Babu's wife died. Some months after the death of his wife Niranjan Babu also passed away. Ma was not in Dacca at that time.

While Ma was living in that house, Mathurmohan Chakravarti and others came during kirtan to have Ma's darshan and brought Ram Thakur along. Ma had first met Ram Thakur at Calcutta. He had prostrated before Ma as soon as he saw her and had proclaimed to all that Ma was 'Bhagavati Devi'. During Kali Puja, the Kali image at Utama Kutir was worshipped by Bholanath, while Ma lay down on the ground nearby.

At the invitation of Chintaharan Samaddar, Ma went to Barishal for a short visit. Then she returned to Munshiganj and went to Vikrampur where she moved from village to village by boat. First Ma went to Tantar, where her father's sister lived, and stayed there for a couple of days. Kirtan was performed. One day in Tantar I was sitting near Ma. Suddenly, Ma tore off a corner of her sari and tied it to my left shoulder. She had tied my arm to the sari I was wearing and I found it very cumbersome. I kept it covered with the shawl on my shoulders, so that others should not see it. I felt, may be Ma would not allow

Trip to Barishal and Vikrampur

me to remove what she had tied. She did not say anything about it. The next day we went to Shyamalad's house at Haldiya village. I had to change my clothes in the morning. I was wearing a jumper and I could not take it off without removing the stub of cloth which Ma had tied. I asked Ma, "What shall I do?" Ma said, "Do not remove it. You may untie it only after seven days." I had to cook for the food offering, cook for Ma, feed Ma. I told Ma, "If I do not change my clothes after going to the toilet and cook your food and feed you wearing the impure clothes, what will people say?" Ma replied, "Do not say anything to anyone. Just go on doing everything in these clothes." It was the first time in my life that I had to remain in one set of clothes and perform worship and other jobs. But Ma's orders did not change. I just wrapped myself into a shawl to hide this fact from people's gaze. Yet I felt that everyone came to know. I did all the work. A great deal of kirtan was performed in that house.

Then Ma went to Venjgao to the house of Bholanath's niece's in-law and from there to Bholanath's own house at Atpara where Bholanath's widowed sister-in-law (Revati Babu's wife) was then living. She requested Ma very pressingly to enter the house, but Ma sat down inside another house close by. Ma replied humbly, "Your orders have never been disobeyed by me, but today I am unable to do what you ask for, what can I do? Tell me yourself" Father, myself, Rajendra Kushari's wife, Amulya and others were with Ma. We also went to Mathur Babu's house at Choygaon and stayed there for a couple of days. Ma had visited his house earlier

along with us. Then we again went to late Sitanath Kushari's house at Dokachi.

In this way we travelled about and returned to Dacca. On the day we reached there, we received a telegram from the house of the Kundus of Calcutta, saying that Yogendra Babu was very ill and would Ma please go to Calcutta! Then we received another telegram informing us that Nandu was very sick at Calcutta. On that very day, Father and I took Ma's permission and went to Calcutta. The next day Ma left for Calcutta and stayed at the house of the Kundus. The day we reached Calcutta, I was to remove the strip tied by Ma, which I did. After a few days, when Nandu and Yogendra Babu had recovered to some extent, we returned to Dacca with Ma. Later on Ma explained to us, "I knew that Nandu was going to fall ill. It was for saving Nandu's life that a strip of cloth had been tied in such a way."

Ma had been to the house of the Kundus at Calcutta two or three times before. Once the girls of the house took Ma to a room full of toys on display and said, "Ma, take whatever you want." A cupboard was packed with various kinds of toys. Ma picked out a 'sucker' and everybody laughed at this. The first time that Ma went to that huge house, she walked about from room to room so freely, it seemed as if she knew the house inside out. Ma gave the 'sucker' to Nandu.

Ma visited every house in Vikrampur and showered bliss wherever she went. She searched out a big vessel full of *Jaddūs* (a round shaped sweet) at one house, and distributed them to all. In another house she emptied a jar of pickles

in the same way. Then she hunted out the offering placed on Goddess Lakshmi's *āsana* at some house and ate it up. Everyone rejoiced in this kind of līlā which Ma played.

Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya of Varanasi organised a *pūjā* of Ma to commemorate Ma's gift of life to Manu. He wrote a letter requesting that Ma should be taken to Varanasi for this *pūjā*. It was decided that we would visit Dinesh Babu at Tangail on the way. Ma's father's sister joined us on the trip as she wanted to go on pilgrimage.

Ma, Bholanath, Nandu, Father, Ma's aunt and I, all left for Tangail. Dinesh Babu and his family rejoiced greatly,

Visit to Dinesh Babu's house
at Tangail

and arranged for *kirtan* in their house. Ma went into *bhāva* there. One day Ma's condition was such that Bholanath and all of us became afraid. Bholanath, as a last resort, asked for water and sprinkled it on Ma's face and eyes. Ma immediately said loudly, "Who is sprinkling water? Am I having fits?" She said this with her eyes closed. Bholanath got flustered and replied, "I have sprinkled water, not knowing what else to do in order to rouse you." Ma smiled slightly, with her eyes remaining shut and remarked, "You have sprinkled lemonade." In fact, everybody was so flurried because of Ma's condition that when water was demanded, a girl picked up a vessel full of lemonade and brought it. Ma got up after a long time.

The next day Dinesh Babu's wife performed *pūjā*. Suddenly Ma began to weep so loudly that Bholanath and others came running from the other room to comfort her. It had so happened that Dinesh Babu and family were very hurt because Bholanath was a bit displeased due to some incident. We

were thus leaving the hosts aggrieved. I have observed that this is how Ma reacts whenever something goes wrong. The Compassionate One only wants all people to live together happily, but this does not always happen in worldly life. Dinesh Babu and family had taken Ma to their house with such delight. But while leaving them when they felt hurt it seemed as if Ma also incurred the wound mentally. Or whether her tears were caused by some other reason, that Ma alone knows. We can only guess. But the matter became quite contrary.

We had to travel a long way by boat before catching a steamer. Ma lay down in the boat. A little later strange things began happening to her body. She started crying bitterly, clamouring to be allowed to jump into the water. Her body was filled with such strength that three or four of us were unable to restrain her. Her condition was frightening. Her eyes were red and her face had a terrible expression. It seemed as if she might just give up her life. Seeing that state I began to weep and to pray to Ma. Father and Bholanath got very upset. After a long time, Ma extended her right hand towards the water and fell asleep. Bholanath tried hard to console her. Fearing that she would certainly jump into the water Bholanath pleaded with her, "What will pacify you? Please calm down." And so on. After a long time she lay down with her right hand extended as described and murmured, "Return". We were then nearing the steamer and Bholanath told Ma so. But Ma kept her eyes shut. She just said twice, "Return". So the boat was made to turn around and we returned to Dinesh Babu's house. They were simply delighted. They made Ma alight from the boat and took her home. Ma kept lying down

for a long time and then sat up. I do not know what she told Bholanath, after which she became calm. Because of Ma's return Dinesh Babu and his family felt greatly relieved and their sorrow was wiped out to a large extent. When they saw that Bholanath had calmed down, they were very happy. In this manner Ma cleared the misunderstanding and left the next day.

In the boat, Ma had extended her right hand and then lay down. From this I concluded that her right hand had somehow become powerless. She was unable to hold anything with that hand and it remained thus for quite a long time.* Later it became alright gradually. No medication or any treatment was given to the hand.

During the time when Ma's right hand was powerless we were once boarding a train at Goyalund. The train compartment was very high. While getting in, I caught hold of Ma's hand and pulled her in effortlessly. At that moment I did not realise it, but a little later, when we were sitting in the compartment, Ma asked me, "How did you lift me into the train?" I replied, "Why, I held your left hand and pulled you up." Ma could not hold anything with her right hand then. Ma said, "How did you pull me up? You lifted such a big body

*For about four months this condition persisted. At some time when the topic came up, Ma explained why her hand became powerless in this way. She said, "Nandu had at first agreed to go with us. Later he reverted. After that in Tangail when this body became strangely affected, Nandu was very frightened. He stroked my right hand and said that he would go with me. But when we were leaving for Varanasi, he again refused to travel with us. He is only a boy and therefore he sometimes says this and that. I had a *kheyāla* that he had stroked the right hand and agreed to go. Later he again expressed his reluctance. He did not know, but this would cause great harm to him. At that time Nandu was always with me like a babe in arms. I had this *kheyāla* and my right hand became powerless.

so easily I cannot hold on to anything." It was only then that even in this I discovered Ma's compassion and glory. For while I was lifting Ma, I did not feel her weight at all, it had felt as if I were holding a very light object and lifting it up. Later I realised that it was just not possible that I could lift Ma's body so high with my own strength, holding her left hand, and that too without injuring her.

After this we went to Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya's house at Varanasi. Great festivities went on there. Ma lay in

samādhi, Bholanath performed her *pūjā*. Kirtan was performed extensively. Ma began offering flowers to one or two children and worshipping them. She smiled slightly and said, "I am performing *pūjā*." She kept lying in *samādhi* most of the time. When she got up she was asked various questions. Whatever Ma spoke in that condition sounded extremely sweet. A supernatural glow radiated from her face and eyes as she spoke. She talked lispingly like a small child. Her face had a very beautiful radiance and a smile. Her speech gradually became clearer and other changes also occurred in her body.

Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya had invited several people on that occasion and had distributed a small booklet in which he had written about the snake bite. Therefore a large crowd had gathered. The Principal of the Government Sanskrit College of Kashi, Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, saw Ma for the first time there. He was enthralled by what Ma spoke. As he heard Ma speak and reply in her simple language to queries from the people, he kept on saying, "This is wonderful. I have

never heard anything like this before." Gopinath Kaviraj kept sitting near Ma, with a fan in one hand with which he fanned her and was listening to her. After this, whenever Ma went to Varanasi, he would go for her darshan. Whatever invocations and incantations emerged from Ma's mouth were unintelligible to most people. Gopinath Kaviraj understood the meaning of a few utterances and stated, "This is truly the language of God. We people with the *samskāras* of this imperfect world cannot understand it." He is extremely learned in many languages and sciences.

Several scholars and important people had come for Ma's darshan. Every evening Ma was made to sit in a very large open space. All the people got Ma's darshan there and could speak to her till about ten o'clock at night when Ma was taken from there to the terrace. Then individuals who wanted to speak privately to Ma could do so one by one. By the time this was over, it would be around 3 a.m. Ma's bedding was spread in a room on the terrace and Ma would lie down for a little. By 4 or 4.30 a.m. many people would present themselves at Ma's feet, with all the necessary items for doing *pūjā*. Ma would be lying down on her bedding when people offered flowers, sandal paste and the holy water of Ganga and worshipped her feet. Before it was fully light, the house was packed with people who had come for Ma's darshan. So much so that there was not even space to stand. No one bothered to ask the house owner's permission to enter his residence, everybody just squeezed into the room. The second and third floors of the house also got jammed. Ma used to sit or lie down in *samādhi*. Her intake of food almost ceased.

The crowds were so huge that it was difficult to even take Ma to wash her face, nobody wanted to leave her even for a little while. Because of such fervour of the people, Ma remained in *samādhi* most of the time.

Swami Shankarananda and Yogendra Rai received Ma's darshan for the first time during this visit to Kashi. Yogendra Rai sang several devotional songs for Ma and Ma expressed great joy on hearing them.

In the evenings people gathered around Ma and sat near her, listening to her words. Before this, Ma had never been made to sit with an audience around her in this manner, neither had Ma ever before enlarged on such profound topics before such a huge audience. And Ma had only a very slight acquaintance with reading and writing. After her marriage, when Ma was given any book to read, she was unable to do so. In Ashtagram when Ma started going into ecstatic states, if she was given any religious text to read, she would barely begin reading it when she became absorbed in *samādhi*. Even if she heard any religious book being read out by anybody, *samādhi* would supervene. Consequently Ma just did not have any knowledge of scriptural texts. I have also mentioned earlier that Ma spoke very little. Most of the time she was engrossed in *bhāva*. This was the first time that Ma's speeches of this kind were being revealed. After this, in Calcutta and other places people would sit near Ma and ask questions and derive much bliss from hearing her invaluable advice.

Day by day, new ideas were expressed by Ma. Kirtan was stopped and everyone listened to Ma's words. Ma was now much less veiled than before, and she was discussing

various topics with everybody quite freely. Earlier she had been lying in *samādhi* most of the time, now this started decreasing. It seemed as if Ma was mixing with people more and more as the days went by. This transition occurred very gradually and smoothly. No one realised how freely Ma was mingling with everyone. So much so that even Bholanath was not aware of the change in Ma's behaviour. One day, when for some reason he became slightly displeased, he questioned Ma about this. Ma smiled a little and replied, "Look, you cannot say anything. I lived in a corner of your house at first. I would not even speak to anyone without your order, I never liked going outside, but you insisted on making me come out before everybody, and you urged me repeatedly to discuss religious topics with people. I have come out before everybody and conversed with them only by your orders. Today I belong to all. What is the use of speaking now?" Laughing, she went on, "You had water in the vessel in your hands. You yourself poured it out on to the earth. Now you cannot gather it again and put it back into the pot. Even if you pick up some water it will be muddy."

I now remember an incident that occurred long ago. Ma used to call the wife of Janaki Baba of Bajitpur, 'Usha Didi'.

Ma's prophecy
to Usha Didi
of Bajitpur

I have already mentioned that she was extremely fond of Ma. When she had come to Dacca, I heard from her that when Ma started going through spiritual practices at Bajitpur, Usha Didi's mother-in-law did not allow Usha Didi to go near Ma for

many believed that Ma was possessed by spirits. But Usha Didi could not live without seeing Ma, so she used to go to Ma clandestinely. She somehow firmly believed that whatever was happening to Ma was good. Devotion towards Ma had awakened in her heart. Once she took her sick boy to Ma. She had firm faith that as soon as Ma touched him he would recover. Really, Ma did something and the boy got well. I have already written that from the beginning certain actions of this kind would come naturally to Ma, by which the patient got relief. Ma says that she does not do anything of her own will. Just as the yogic postures occurred of themselves, this also happened similarly. After this Usha Didi's devotion increased even more. One day she saw Ma's exalted condition and remarked, "I have a desire to call you 'Ma'. I do not feel sisterly towards you. I feel you are like a mother to me." Ma was in *samādhi*. She paused awhile and replied, "Not you alone. One day many people of the world will call this body 'Ma'."

This visit of Ma to Varanasi occurred about three years after she made this statement. Never before had Ma sat in a gathering outside in this manner. Ma spoke Ma's presence at Varanasi on many matters and everybody listened.

Some people asked questions. During these sessions, Ma once revealed her true nature, but so very indistinctly that not all could understand.

One night, after almost everyone had left, Ma and the people of the house and a couple of outsiders were sitting on the terrace. It was about 2 or 3 a.m. Suddenly Ma said,

"Death is coming." We could not understand whose death Ma was referring to. All present became immersed in worry, but no further words came out of Ma's mouth. Since Manu's mother (Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya's wife) was the hostess, she was most worried. She said, "Ma, let death come to me if it must, but let everyone else remain well." Ma glanced at her and smiled. In the bliss of Ma's company, no one had much time to think about the matter further.

Festivities were on day and night. On fulimoon day it was decided that Ma would leave that very day. The previous night, Manu's mother had said to me, "I could not feed Ma even once because of this onrush of people. I had the desire to cook *bhāte-bhāt** and feed Ma in my kitchen as we feed our children, with big, hot mouthfuls. Then I wanted to distribute the remaining as *prasāda*. But all this was just not possible in this confusion. Ma also does not eat anything in her present condition." She went on in this strain.

We were to leave the next evening with Ma for Calcutta. Seeing Ma slightly free for a few moments in the morning I took her to wash her face. I had shut the door of the bathroom and was changing her dress and washing her face. In between Ma said to me, "Look, we are leaving today. Today is full moon. No one eats during the day." (This rule was being followed by us since the Shahbagh days.) "But today I want to eat *bhāte-bhāt*." I suddenly remembered Manu's mother's desire to feed Ma with *bhāte-bhāt* which she had spoken about the previous night. I was taken aback. I immediately told Ma, "Ma, just yesterday Manu's mother

*Rice cooked with potatoes and other vegetables.

spoke about feeding you *bhāte-bhāt*." Ma said, "You did not tell me this earlier." I replied, "Since you yourself have asked for it, I shall go and tell her to prepare it." Ma said, "Alright, go and tell her. But none of you should eat during the day, only I shall eat. I have not eaten for so many days, so there is no comparison between you all and me." I laughed and said, "Be it so." When Ma went outside and sat with all the people, I ran to Manu's mother and told her about the *bhāte-bhāt*. All were astonished and delighted. The dish was cooked immediately. Manu's mother sat in the kitchen and began feeding Ma with big mouthfuls. Ma ate a lot. She had not been taking anything all these days, but that day she was fulfilling Manu's mother's desire. As Manu's mother was feeding Ma, in the course of conversation she remarked, "Ma, it looks as if some ancestor of ours performed great penance and pleased you. As a reward of this, our entire family is able to gather in this way to have your darshan." Ma smiled slightly and murmured as she ate, "Fourteen generations ago." Manu's mother immediately called everybody and told them this. Then Ma explained, "See, it happens this way: Bholanath's family too is similar. After every seven generations, someone attains to Self-realization." All were entranced to hear this. Father and Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya considered themselves extremely fortunate when they heard Ma's statement, for they were brothers, and their own ancestor had pleased Ma with his spiritual practices, because of which they were now obtaining Ma's darshan. The sons, daughters, sons-in-law and almost all relatives of these two brothers were united at Ma's feet.

A little later, the topic of Siddheshwari came up. Ma revealed, "That spot is connected with Shankaracharya." She did not say anything further. Ma told Yogendra Rai, "You have filled our hearts with your singing of kirtan." Ma left for Calcutta on full moon day, taking all of us with her. All the devotees in Varanasi went to the station to see her off. Ma left everyone in tears.

We went first to Surendra Mukhopadhyaya's house in Calcutta, and then returned to Uttama Kutir. A few days after Ma's return from Varanasi, Kunjamohan Ma's arrival at Mukhopadhyaya informed Ma that his wife Dacca was stricken with cholera. His next telegram gave the news of her death. We then understood the import of Ma's words at Varanasi, "Death is coming".

A few days after her return from Varanasi Prafulla Ghosh (the Rai Bahadur's son) took Ma to Kumilla where he was then residing. Large crowds gathered there during Ma's visit to Ma's sojourn. Ma was made to sit in a room, but the people who had come for her darshan, tried to break the doors of the room and enter. Finally Ma was taken to an open field and seated there.

After spending a few days at Kumilla, Ma left for Calcutta. This time she stayed at Charu Ghosh's house. The Rai Bahadur and his wife were also present. The atmosphere was charged with bliss. Bhramara sang songs for Ma. One day, Ma was having some food when suddenly the Rai Bahadur said, "I want to feed Ma, but I have no restrictions at all about my

diet ; will Ma eat from my hand ?" Ma said, "It is all right, since it is your desire you may feed me something." I was feeding Ma. The Rai Bahadur fed Ma with some fruit and sweetmeat. Ma said, "Whatever you eat from today onwards, offer it to God first and then eat it." The Rai Bahadur replied, "But I eat all kinds of things — even that which should not be eaten." Ma said, "Whatever you may eat at any time, offer it to God mentally and then eat it." The Rai Bahadur agreed. As a result his diet gradually changed. Ma had asked him to sing kirtan of Hari's Name. He did so. Finally, Rai Bahadur himself declared with great joy, "By Ma's grace I have developed a liking for the repetition of God's name." He performed a lot of kirtan and also listened to much kirtan. He used to go to Ma's Ashram every day and bow down before her. Great reverence for Ma was aroused within him. The transformation in his life is an example of Ma's limitless grace.

After spending a few days at Calcutta, Ma returned to Dacca. Some days later Ma's body went through a terrible condition. I have already mentioned that — change in Ma's bodily condition — Ma's breathing would become extremely fast. Whether Ma was sitting up or lying down, the breathing would suddenly become greatly accelerated. She would either lie down or sit up while this condition lasted, and I would massage her spine or her hands and feet, but Ma could not feel my massage at all. Bholanath would also massage with all his might. Then Ma would say, "I can feel a bit." The entire body was as if paralysed. In Calcutta this kind of condition occurred while Ma was at Surendra Mukhopadhyaya's house and at other places. Jiteendra Dada and

Navataru Dada got fatigued by massaging Ma's hands and feet, yet Ma could hardly feel anything. This condition persisted for a long while each time, then it wore off gradually.

One day, while we were alone at Uttama Kutir, Ma told me, "See, it is not certain what I shall do. If I go out of Dacca, Ma's foresight about leaving Dacca then you should observe silence from the day of my departure. Do not speak until I return." Further she said, "Do not tell this to anyone." I was always in fearful suspense about when Ma would leave. I understood that this time she would not take us along. But later we heard that Bholanath did not agree to the manner in which Ma wanted to go out of station, and therefore she could not go at that time. Much later Ma stayed for only twenty-four hours at the newly built Ashram at Ramna and then left Dacca with her father, leaving Bholanath behind at Dacca.

One day I went to Uttama Kutir and found that Ma had burnt her foot at one spot and left a wound there. We heard that on that day or the day before, Jyotish Dada had said to Ma conversationally, "If fire is placed on your body, can you feel it or not?"

The effect of fire on Ma's body — the absence of heat in fire To find out for herself how she would feel if fire were placed on her body, Ma went to the kitchen alone after the mid-day meal, took a piece of burning coal and placed it on her foot. Someone caught the scent of burning hair and entered the kitchen to find Ma seated with a burning coal on her foot. The hair on the foot was burning and the smell was spreading all round. When Ma saw the person entering the

kitchen, she threw the coal away and went outside. Ma was laughing and narrating this incident when she met us. She said, "I was noting what it felt like. But I tell you truly, I did not feel it at all." We asked, "If you did not feel any heat at all, then how did the injury occur? If the burn were not present, then it would have been possible that you did not feel it." Ma laughed and replied, "If no injury were present, then what proof would there have been that fire had been placed there? Fire will do its work." Absentmindedly Ma rubbed the burn boil and it became huge. The injury healed only after several days. The mark of it is still visible on the foot. Ma had once kept fire on the back of her palm earlier, and had also made a cut with a knife. Both these marks are present even now.

Once Didima fell very ill at Uttama Kutir. A young boy named Ramani Mohan had just passed out of the Medical School. Ma had named him Kalidas. Kalidas was a staunch devotee of Ma and served Didima very faithfully. From the time that Didima became so ill, Ma suddenly stopped going to her room altogether. She would go out somewhere past the room, but would not enter the room for about seven days. For those seven days Didima's condition was very bad. On the eighth day, Ma entered Didima's room and lay down on one corner of her mattress. After that Didima recovered gradually.

Once, another student of the medical school went to Ma. Ma asked him, "Have you come by carriage?" He replied,

"No, I have come walking. I avoid going by carriage, for it is a sin to make horses suffer." Ma said, "Look, there is no sin in that. Just as you have been born to do certain kinds of work and if you don't do it your karma will not be exhausted, so also these horses have been born in order to exhaust their karma. Therefore, if anyone gives you the opportunity to accomplish this work it will be an aid to you. The horse cannot exhaust its karma by studying medicine; by drawing carriages it fulfils its destiny. Therefore humans should provide the chance for the horse to do its work. Whatever work falls to each one's lot, it is necessary for him to go on doing it."

One day in November or December of the year 1928, while Ma was living at Uttama Kutir, she had her meal and suddenly went to Dhakeshwari temple with Bholanath.

Ma leaves Uttama Kutir A little later, Ma said, "Bring a carriage. We shall go to Siddheshwari." Bholanath was about to go to Uttama Kutir to get something, but Ma said, "I shall not enter Uttama Kutir anymore." She went to Siddheshwari immediately. Later I also went to Siddheshwari and found her seated there. Realising that Ma would not return to Uttama Kutir, her bedding and other things were taken to Siddheshwari. The establishment at Uttama Kutir was wound up. Dadumāsai and Didima returned home. Ma had stayed at Uttama Kutir for only six or seven months.

Makhan shifted to our house at Tikatali. Matari Piśima, Amulya, Kamalakant and another widowed lady went to Ashwani

Kumar's house in Siddheshwari. Ashwini Kumar's wife and children were always near Ma. In this way Ma suddenly abandoned the establishment at Uttama Kutir.

The image of Kali was placed in a wooden cupboard which was specially made for it and kept in the Siddheshwari Ashram. In 1928, Kah went to Siddheshwari. This was the fourth time that the Kali image was being shifted. The sacrificial fire was also kept in front of the Kali temple at Siddheshwari in a pit beneath a peepul tree. Kulada Dada would go there every day and offer oblations. He also performed Šiva Puja and read the Durga Saptasati. Sometimes he would remain there till 2 or 3 a.m. to complete all these duties before returning home. Kulada Dada had profound faith in Ma. While Ma was at Uttama Kutir, Kulada Dada's second son was stricken with cholera. Kulada Dada did not have his son treated with any medicine. He only made him drink the water into which Ma's feet had been dipped (*charanamrita*). He believed that if the boy were to live, he would be saved by this alone. But the boy died. Kulada Dada did not at all regret that he had not tried to administer medicines to his son. He had unshakable faith that if his son were to live, he would have been saved by Ma's *charanamrita*.

He had only three sons. The second son died thus. After the death of their son, both he and his wife came to Ma. He stood outside the room where Ma was seated. As soon as his wife entered Ma's room, Ma began to weep so bitterly, that the bereaved mother could no longer express her grief over the loss of her son. Instead, she started consoling Ma. In this way, Ma herself cried and lightened the burden on the heart

of the grieving mother. How many such instances of Ma's *lila* keep on occurring!

Ma told Bholanath to sit in the small room of the Kali temple at Siddheshwari and perform his spiritual practices. At that time the rule that no one was to stay near Ma for more than ten minutes was started. Consequently Ma would keep sitting all alone most of the time in the room at the Siddheshwari Ashram. Kamalakant did the cooking. In Shahbagh and at Uttama Kutir, I used to be near Ma till very late at night. Ma would sometimes suddenly go to Siddheshwari for a day or two. Once she remained there for seven days, but on that occasion also I stayed with her most of the time and cooked the food. After the new order was declared, I had no way of being near Ma for most of the time. Bholanath would sit in the temple and do his work for long hours and then go to the Ashram.

One evening I reached the Ashram and heard that Ma had said, "To-morrow Bholanath is leaving Dacca for some place.

Bholanath leaves
Dacca suddenly All of you may go to the station and see him off". She did not reveal his destination.

Bholanath had then taken a vow of silence since a few days, so he was not speaking to anyone. He left by the Calcutta mail. Yogesh Dada was leaving later with the sacrificial fire.

Ma was staying on at Siddheshwari. Such a thing had never happened before, for wherever it might be, Ma and Bholanath had always gone together. As per Ma's orders, all of us went to Siddheshwari the next day and took Bholanath to the station. Ma went along with us. Bholanath bade

farewell and spoke to everybody and left with Yogesh Dada. The sacrificial fire was also given to them. We returned to Siddheshwari with Ma. Jyotish Dada was with us. It was decided that the ten minutes regulation, which had been imposed during Bholanath's presence, would be continued for another week. Kamalakant and a widowed lady were to stay near Ma. In the night any one person would come and stay at the Ashram. It was decided that Father would spend the night at the Ashram. Seven days passed thus. On the morning of the eighth day, Ma began staying in the small room near the Kali temple at Siddheshwari. She left a message saying, "Let no one enter this room. Whencver I happen to come out myself, people can see me." So as soon as the ten minute regulation was stopped, this rule was begun. Ma would come out for awhile, partake of some little food and return to the room. On the evening of the day that she entered the room, she came and sat by the pond. We were present there. Ma said to me privately, "For a few days meet me once every day and then go away. Do not stay here." I felt very hurt by this. I used to sit near Ma day and night for as much time as possible. Seven days were spent in that regulation, and now this order was given. But since Ma had told me, I agreed to it. I went away that day. Father and the others stayed on.

Glossary of Sanskrit Words

GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT WORDS

Adhivasa Ceremonies performed on the eve of any auspicious function.

Akhandā uninterrupted, unbroken.

Amārasya The night of the new moon.

Anjali Literally the hollow formed by joining the open hands together. Offering of flowers or water with folded hands.

Aratt A devotional ceremony in Hindu worship with the waving of lights, incense etc. before the object of adoration.

Āsana 1. Yogic posture or physical pose. Every posture corresponds to a particular state of mind.

2. Small mat or carpet used as a seat by each person individually.

Āśrama (i) The four *Āśramas* (*brahmacarya, grhaṣṭha, vana-prastha, saṅkhyāsa*) are the four successive stages of life from the view point of a pilgrim on the spiritual path.

(ii) hermitage, abode of ascetics.

Aṣṭami The eighth day in a lunar half month. The main day of Durga Puja, which is performed on *Saptami*, *Aṣṭami* and *Navami* of the bright half of the month of Aswin (October).

Bālakhilya A class of divine personages of the size of a thumb, produced from the Creator's body and said to precede the sun's chariot (their number is said to be sixty thousand).

Bela Wood apple. (Aegle marmelos).

Bhagavat Śakti Divine Power that is eternal and supreme and of the nature of consciousness.

Bhairava A form of Siva (of which eight kinds are enumerated).

Bhairavi Sadhika worshipping Siva.

Bhātebhāt A dish of rice and vegetables cooked together with ghee.

Bhava (i) State of being, inner disposition.

(ii) Divine mood.

(iii) Devotion for one's object of worship.

(iv) Spiritual ecstasy, transcendental mood, generally emotional in nature. *Bhāvas* usually occur at elevated stages of the path of *bhakti*.

Bhoga Food offering to the object of worship.

Bija mantra Literally 'seed mantra'. A mystic syllable which is, as it were, the seed of a particular aspect of Divinity. By concentrated, sustained repetition of the seed mantra that aspect can be realized.

Boudi Sister-in-law (in Bengali).

Brahmacārī A religious student who devotes himself to spiritual practices and to service, and observes strict celibacy.

Brahma Kalvalya Identification with the Supreme Being.

Candi (i) An epithet of Goddess Durgā.

(ii) An alternate name for Durga Saptasati which is a hymn of Goddess Durga in seven hundred *slokas*. It forms a part of the Markandeya Purāna.

Caranāmṛta It is a custom to ceremonially wash (or rather dip into water) the feet of saints or deities. The water is then called caranāmṛta and is drunk by the people in the belief that power and purity are transmitted to them by it.

Caturthi The fourth day of a lunar fortnight.

Chinnamasta "Devi as Uma, Parvati and Gauri, is the spouse of Siva. It was as Sati prior to Daksa's sacrifice (*yajña*) that the Devi manifested Herself to Siva in the ten celebrated forms known as the *daśa-mahavidyā*... Kali, Bagala, Chinnamasta, Bhuvaneshwari, Matangini, Sodasi, Dhūmati, Tripurasundari, Tara and Bhairavi. When at the Daksa *yajña* She yielded up Her life in shame and sorrow at the treatment accorded by Her father to Her husband, Siva took away the body and ever bearing it with him, remained wholly distraught and spent with grief. To save the world from the forces of evil which arose and grew with the withdrawal of His Divine control, Vianu with His discus, cut the dead body of Sati which Siva bore, into fifty-one fragments, which fell to earth at the places thereafter known as the fifty-one maha-pithasthāna, where Devi with Her Bhairava is worshipped under various names." Introduction to Tantra Śāstra by Sir John Woodroffe; Ganesh and Co. (Madras) Pvt. Ltd. 1960, pp. 15-16.

Cit Ananda Svarupa Of the nature of Pure Consciousness and Bliss.

Darshan Sight, vision. One speaks of having darshan of a saint, sage or deity, which means to be blessed by his sight and presence.

Dashami The tenth day of a lunar fortnight.

Dassarah The tenth day of the bright half of the month of Jyestha, the tenth day of the bright half of the month of

Aswin, the last day of Durgā Puja, when the image is immersed in a river or pond.

Devi Goddess.

Dharmakaya The Buddha.

Dharmasāla A rest-house for pilgrims.

Dhoti A cloth which is worn round the waist.

Dhyāna Meditation. It is preceded by mental concentration (*dhārana*) and followed by *samādhi*. When the stream of attention is constant (like the flowing of oil) it is called *dhyāna*. The highest *dhyāna* is transcendent and discriminative in character, and can come about only when the ego-consciousness is dissolved.

Dhyāna Mandir Meditation room.

Dikṣā Initiation into the spiritual life, effected through the grace of the Guru who represents the Divine. During *dikṣā* a mantra or one of the potent names of God is usually communicated to the disciple, who is asked to repeat it regularly and in a specific manner.

Durva A kind of sacred grass used at sacrificial ceremonies.

Fakir Mohammedan religious mendicant or saint.

Ghāts The bathing places on the bank of a river.

Ghee Clarified butter.

Halāhala A very deadly poison

Havana Sacrificial fire.

Iṣṭa Literally "Beloved". The chosen deity one worships, *Iṣṭa* is the particular aspect of the Divine with which the

disciple will have to be in perfect communion before the Supreme Divine Gnosis becomes possible.

Japa Repetition of a *mantra* or a name of God, imparted by the *Guru* at the time of *dikṣā* (see *dikṣā*). The repetition, as one of the daily disciplinary exercises may be for a fixed or indefinite number of times. There are three kinds of *japa* namely vocal (*vācika*), semivocal (*upāmsu*) and mental (*mānasika*). The last is supposed to be the best. The sound should, as a rule, be inaudible to others. *Japa* may be done either without rhythm or rhythmically, following the natural rhythm of one's breath. The counting during *japa* may be done with the help of one's fingers in the prescribed manner, or with the help of a rosary.

Jīva Individual consciousness, monadic in character. It is conceived either as an eternal aspect of the eternal Brahman or as an artificial manifestation of the Brahman under the influence of *māyā* or *avidyā*, (ignorance of the true nature of Reality) and ceases to exist when that influence subsides through the supervention of *jñāna* (see *jñāna*).

Jīvanmukti One who has attained to *Jīvanmukti*, (Liberation), while living in the physical world.

Jñāna Literally knowledge. True Knowledge is immediate and represents the unity of Reality. Every other knowledge belongs to the category of *ajñāna*.

Kaivalya Final emancipation or beatitude, identification with the Supreme Spirit.

Kālī A name of the Divine Mother. Kālī is the destroyer of evil. In Bengal Kālī Puja is celebrated during the dark night of the *Diwali* festival in the month of *Kartika* (October-November).

Karma Action, the result of action, as well as the law of cause and effect by which actions inevitably bear their fruits. Karma originates from the individual self in its ignorance functioning as an active agent. When man realises his own true Self, karma ceases for him.

Kartāla Cymbals.

Kaṭyapa Name of a celebrated sage.

Khanda bhāva Limited, partial *bhāva*.

Khir Rice cooked in milk and sugar.

Kheyāla Ordinarily a sudden and unexpected psychic emergence, be it desire, will, attention, memory or knowledge. Ma, however, has given the word a much wider meaning. She describes as *kheyāla* the incomprehensible acts of the Supreme, as for instance His dividing Himself in creation, etc. In Ma's case there is no ego to account for her movements, feelings and thoughts. When she uses the word *kheyāla* with reference to her own person, it must be understood to denote a spontaneous upsurge of Will, which is divine and therefore free.

Khichdi A preparation of rice, dal and vegetables cooked together.

Khuśīr Ma The Happy Mother.

Kirtan The chanting or singing of the names or glories of God. It may be performed by one person or by a group of people to the accompaniment of musical instruments,

chiefly drums and cymbals. It is meant to be audible to others so that they may benefit by listening.

Korān The sacred book of Mohammedans.

Kṛṣṇapakṣa The dark half of the lunar month.

Kriyā Creative action. In *tantric* literature *kriya* is used in the sense of activity that is eternally associated with knowledge and leads to perfection, in which knowledge and action are found to be identical.

Kula Guru Family preceptor.

Laddu A sweetmeat in the shape of a ball.

Lichi The fruit of the tree *seytalla lichi*.

Lilā Literally 'play'. Movements and activities of the Supreme Being that are free by nature and not subject to laws. Vaiṣṇavas explain Creation as the *lilā* of God.

Mahābhāva The highest type of self-dedication to the Divine as represented by Sri Rādhā in Vaiṣṇava symbolism. A state of deep ecstatic love for the Divine.

Mahābhāvamayī One who is the personification of *Mahābhāva*.

Mahādevī The Supreme Goddess.

Mahāmāyā The Supreme Power, the Prime cause of all Creation. A name of Kali, the Divine Mother.

Mahāfakti The Supreme Divine Power which is often symbolised in the form of a *Devi* (goddess).

Maida Fine flour.

Mandira Temple.

Mangala kalata An urn with water offered to the gods on auspicious occasions.

Mantra A series of sounds of great potency. It is the sound representation of the *Bija Devatā*. Name and form are inseparable. If therefore, the name is instinct with life, the form that it represents is bound to reveal itself, provided the practice is intensive enough. A mantra is a word of power, divine power transmitted through a word.

Mānuja Kāli Goddess Kali in a human form.

Mauna The practice of silence. It may either mean to abstain from speech; or to abstain from signs, gestures and writing as well as from speech, or the complete stilling of the activities of the mind as well.

Māyā The Supreme Divine Power by which the One conceals Itself and appears as the many.

Mokṣa Final emancipation, deliverance of the soul from the ceaseless round of births and deaths.

Mudrā Particular pose of the body as a whole or of its parts, representing the expression of a particular *deva sakti* (higher natural force). Without that pose the particular *sakti* cannot function. The performance of these *mudrās* produces necessary changes in the mind or character. In Ma's case these *mudrās* came spontaneously.

Mumukṣu One who is striving for final emancipation.

Nāma Name

Nāma Kirtana Singing God's names.

Namaz Mohammedan form of prayer.

Navami The ninth day of the lunar half month.

Padmāsana Lotus pose. One of the meditative yogic postures.

Pakhāraja A kind of drum.

Pālā kirtana Ballad singing about the glories of God.

Pancāṅga Pranāma Obeisance made by touching the floor with the two legs, the two hands and the head

Panchavati A grove of five sacred trees, namely pipal, banyan, ashoka, bel, amloki, with a platform in the middle. A panchavati is considered a congenial place for meditation.

Pradakṣīna Circumambulation from left to right, so that the right side is always turned towards the person or object circumambulated.

Prakṛiti Nature or Primordial Matter.

Pranāma Obeisance. An act of surrender, indicating the sense of one's own smallness in the presence of the One to whom obeisance is offered. There are various ways of doing *pranāma*; the most common is to kneel down and touch the ground with one's head.

Prāṇayāma Rhythmic breath control. This control is over all the functions of breathing namely, (1) inhalation or inspiration which is termed *pūraka* (filling up); (2) exhalation or expiration, which is called *recaṇa* (emptying the lungs); (3) retention or holding the breath which is termed *kumbhaka*.

Prasāda Food offered to a deity or saint becomes *prasāda* when it has been accepted and blessed. It is then partaken of by the devotees.

Puṣṭi Ceremonial worship of the Hindus. Offering to the object of adoration various articles representing all aspects of oneself.

Pūrī A thin flat cake of wheat flour fried in clarified butter or oil.

Purn mā Full moon day.

Purna Kumbha An ancient religious festival celebrated at twelve years' interval in four holy cities alternately : Hardwar, Prayag, Nasik, Ujjain.

Puruṣa The Supreme Spirit.

Puruṣa Kaivalya Identification with the Supreme Person, God.

Rsi Seer. The *Rsis* are said to form a class of beings by themselves, distinct from gods, men, *asuras* (demons) etc. They are those to whom *mantras* are revealed.

Rudrākṣa Seeds of the *eleocarpus ganitrus* tree, sacred to Śiva. Rosaries are made from the berries of this tree and used by worshippers of Śiva.

Sādhanā Spiritual practice performed for the purpose of preparing oneself for Self-realisation.

Sādhu One who has dedicated his life to spiritual endeavour and is free from family and business entanglements.

Sakti Power that is eternal and supreme and of the nature of consciousness. It is the moving power of Nature and Super Nature. In Hindu mythology *Sakti* is often symbolised by a divine woman.

Samādhi A state in which the mind is either completely concentrated on its object of contemplation (*svavikalpa samādhi*) or ceases to function and only Pure Consciousness remains, revealing Itself to Itself (*nvavikalpa samādhi*).

Saṁnyāsa Renunciation. According to the ancient Hindu system it is the last stage of human life, in which a man has to renounce his family, possessions, caste, social position, etc. — in fact everything to which he is attached — and surrender himself to the Divine. Technically it is of two kinds, namely, *vividisa saṁnyāsa* preceded by a sense of detachment from the world, and *vidvat saṁnyāsa*, which is *saṁnyāsa* par excellence, preceded by the dawn of Brahman-jñāna (Realisation of the Brahman). The former is called *linga saṁnyāsa*, in which certain rules of discipline have to be observed. The other is absolute freedom.

Saṁnyāsi One who has taken *saṁnyāsa* (*vividisa saṁnyāsi*) or one who has spontaneously become a *saṁnyāsi* (*vidvat saṁnyāsi*).

Samskāra Literally purification, consecration.

Impressions, mental dispositions, psychic traces left in the mind after any experience. They act like seeds and have a tendency to germinate into action. These *samskāras* are often brought over from former births. They are burnt up when the Light of Supreme Knowledge (*jñāna*) shines forth.

Samskāra in this sense means very much the same as *vāyana*.

Sandhyā vandana Specific spiritual practice performed daily as a duty at sunrise and sunset.

Sankrānti The passage of the Sun or any other planetary body from one zodiacal sign into another. Celebrated as a festival by Hindus.

Saptami The seventh day of the lunar half month.

Sāri The dress of Hindu women. A long piece of cloth worn round the body and passing over the head.

Śāstras The sacred Hindu scriptures.

Śāṣṭāṅga Respectful obeisance made by the prostration of the eight members of the body.

Śashti The sixth day of a lunar half month.

Satsanga The company of sages, sāmis and seekers after Truth, either the physical company, or in an applied sense by reading holy scriptures or the lives and teachings of saints. Also a religious meeting. In its widest sense the practice of the presence of God.

Siddhā A sage or seer. A perfected being.

Siddhi Realisation, fulfilment. Also an occult power gained by yoga.

Sindūr Vermillion, minium, applied in the parting of the hair as a symbol of the married state of a woman.

Śiva Literally 'Good'. A form of the Supreme Deity. The aspect of the Divine Personality that is associated with the dissolution of the universe. The destroyer of that which is unreal. Śiva also stands for the Supreme Being Itself.

Śivarātri Thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of Phalgun (usually occurs in February). A festival when Śiva is worshipped all night after a whole day's complete fast.

Śodatopacāra Worship with sixteen kinds of offerings.

Śraddha Rites performed for a departed soul.

Sthitaprajña Established in Knowledge of Reality.

Tāndava Dancing in general, particularly the vigorous dance of Śiva.

Tantra A class of Hindu Śastras which are said to constitute the Scripture of the Kaliyuga; a code of religious cere-

monies, in particular for the worship of Śiva and Durgā. The Tantra Śāstra is a development of the Karmakānda, the portion of the Vedas which relates to ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites.

Tilak A mark made on the forehead either as an emblem of sect or for ornament.

Tithi A lunar day.

Tulasi A plant with very fragrant leaves, considered holy by Hindus; a variety of basil.

Turiya The fourth state in which man realizes his oneness with the Brahman (Supreme Spirit).

Varga Square of a number.

Vāsanti Pūjā Durgā Pūjā in spring.

Vasanta panchami The fifth day of the bright half of the month of Māgha. Saraswati the Goddess of learning, music and Supreme Knowledge, is worshipped on that day.

Vedi Altar.

Vrata Religious act of devotion or austerity, vowed observance.

Yajña kunda The pit in which a sacrificial fire is kept.

Yoga Literally 'union'. Various methods for realizing the union of the individual Ātma with the universal Ātma.

Yogi One who practises yoga or has mastered it.

Index of Names

INDEX OF NAMES

<i>Name</i>	<i>Page number on which it first appears</i>
A	
Akhandananda Giri (Swami) (name of Sri Shashanka Mohan Mukhopadhyaya after he took <i>sañcaya</i>)	xxxv
Amulya (son of Bholanath's sister Matari Piśimā)	30
Anandamayi (the name given to Ma by Sri Jyotish Chandra Rai) (Bhaiji)	3
Anantha Babu	155
Aparna Devi (eldest daughter of Sri Chittaranjan Das)	179
Ashu (son of Bholanath's brother, Revati Mohan)	30
Ashutosh Bandopadhyaya (of Ramakrishna Road, Tiktuli)	141
Atal	60
Atal Bihari Bhattacharya (Professor at Rajasahī)	86
Atul Datta	106
B	
Baby Didi (Nalini Babu's wife)	161
Balanandaji (Swami) of Deogarh	106

Baul Chandra Vasak (Lecturer in the Vakil Institution), a boyhood friend of Bholanath

25

Bholanath (the name by which Ma's husband, Sri Ramani Mohan Chakravarti was known amongst devotees)

10

Bhoodev Chandra Vasu (Assistant Superintendent of the estate of the Nawab of Dacca at Bajitpur and Bholanath's boss)

15

Bhramara (eldest grand-daughter of Rai Bahadur Jogesh Chandra Ghosh)

148

Bipin Bibari Bhattacharya (Ma's father, known as Dādāmāsai)

3

C

Chaitanyaadeva (famous saint of Bengal who lived from 1486 to 1534)

40

Chandi Babu (Rai Bahadur Jogesh Chandra's youngest son)

155

Chandranath Bhattacharya (Didimā's neighbour)

6

Charu Babu

191

Chintaharan Bandopadhyaya

168

Chintaharan Samaddar (Police Sub-Inspector)

89

Name

Page number on which it first appears

D

Dadamaśai (Grandfather, Ma's father was called thus)

4

Dakṣayano (one of the five names given to Ma by her parents)

3

Didimā (Grandmother, Ma's mother was called thus)

4

Dinesh Babu (of Dhankoda)

160

Dinesh Chandra Rai (Munsif at Calcutta)

181

Dvijendra Babu (lawyer at Narayanganj, Ashu's maternal uncle)

63

G

Gajaganga (one of the five names given to Ma by her parents)

3

Girija Shankar Bhattacharya (Professor at Rajsahi College)

56

Gokul Thakur

67

Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj Mahamahopadyaya, (Ex-Director of the Government Sanskrit College, Varanasi)

xv

Gurubandhu Bhattacharya

51

Dr. Guruprasad

136

Gurupriya Devi (known as Didi to Ma's devotees, her official name was

Name	Page number on which it first appears
Adarini Devi and she was called Khukuni)	xix
Gusaiji (the Guru of Revati Sen)	110
H	
Harakumar Rai (Jashankar Sen's brother-in-law)	12
Harides (Nandu, Didi's brother)	84
Harsha Babu	155
Hemangini (Ma's sister)	4
J	
Jagbandhu Chakravarti (Bholanath's father)	10
Janaki Sen	19
Jai Shankar Sen	11
Jitendra Thakur (Nirmal Babu's Guru)	156
Jitendra Mukhopadhyaya (Kunjamohan's son)	124
Jyotish Chandra Rai (I.S.O., Personal Assistant to Director of Agriculture, Bengal, called 'Bhaiji' by Ma's devotees)	xi
K	
Kali Prasanna Kashari (Bholanath's sister's husband)	33

Name	Page number on which it first appears
Kamala (one of the five names given to Ma by her parents)	3
Kamalakanta Brahmachari	133
Karnini Kumar Chakravarti (Bholanath's younger brother)	10
Khukuni (Didi's pet name)	44
Kshetra Babu	13
Kuladakant Bandopadhyaya	151
Kuodus of Bhagyakul	154
Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya (younger brother of Shashanka Mohan)	155
L	
Lavanya (Bholanath's eldest brother's daughter)	91
M	
Mahadaiya (a gardener's wife)	132
Dr. Mahendra Nandi (of Kalikachak)	17
Makhan (Yadunath Bhattacharya, Ma's brother)	11
Manu (Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya's fifth son)	170
Matari Piśima (Bholanath's widowed sister)	30
Mathur Vasu	50

Name	Page number on which it first appears
Mathur Mohan Chakravarti	204
Maromi (Bholanath's eldest sister's grand-daughter)	95
Mokshada Sundari Devi (Ma's mother, who was called Didima by devotees)	3
N	
Nandu (Didi's brother whose official name is Haridas)	106
Nani Gopal Banerji (Professor at Dacca College)	25
Nalini Babu (of Uyari)	161
Nagendra Babu	172
Navataru Haldar	110
Nepal Chandra Chakravarti (who became Swami Narayanananda Tirtha after taking <i>sannyasa</i>)	xiii
Niranjan Rai (Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax, Bhaiji's friend)	96
Nirmala Sundari (Ma's childhood name)	3
Nirmala Devi (Ma's childhood play-mate)	175
Nirmal Chandra Chattopadhyaya	xxvi
Nishikant Bhattacharya (Ma's maternal uncle's son)	18

Name	Page number on which it first appears
Nishikant Mitra (zamindar of Sam-siddhi in Vikrampur)	25
Nripendra Ch. Ghosh (of Tikatuli)	122
P	
Piśimā (Bholanath's sister, Mokshada Devi, wife of Kali Prasanna Kushari of Salkiya)	44
Prafulla Chandra Ghosh (third son of Rai Bahadur Yogesh Chandra Ghosh)	33
Pramatha Nath Vasu (Deputy Post Master General)	85
Prangopal Mukhopadhyaya (Deputy Post Master General of Dacca)	25
Pratul (Pramatha Nath's son)	32
Pyari Banu (lady from the household of the Nawab of Dacca)	154
R	
Rai Bahadur (Sri Yogesh Chandra Ghosh)	15
Rajendra Kushari	87
Raj Mohan Babu	91
Ramakrishna Dev (Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the saint of Bengal who lived from 1836 to 1886)	40

Name	Page number on which it first appears
Ramani Mohan (young graduate from the Medical School, named 'Kalidas' by Ma)	220
Ramani Mohan Chakravarti (Ma's husband, known as Bholanath)	10
Ram Thakur	204
Ras Bihari Ghosh	22
Revati Mohan Chakravarti (Bholanath's eldest brother)	10
Revati Sen	110
S	
Samvaran (who established Siddheshwari Temple)	62
Satya Babu (of Bakshi Bazar in Dacca)	178
Shankar (Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya's son)	171
Shankarananda Swami	210
Sharada Shankar (Jai Shankar Sen's son)	11
Shashanka Mohan Mukhopadhyaya (Didi's father, retired Civil Surgeon of Dacca became Swami Akhandananda Giri)	XXXV
Shashi Bhushan Dasgupta (photographer of Chittagong)	140

Name	Page number on which it first appears
Shrishchandra	175
Shyamakant Bandopadhyaya (of Jamshedpur, son-in-law of Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya)	170
Shyamaladi (of Haldiya village)	205
Sitanath Kushari (Bholanath's eldest sister's husband)	71
Suniti Didi (Baby Didi's brother's wife)	161
Surabala (Ma's sister)	4
Surendra Mohan Chakravarti (Bholanath's elder brother)	10
Surendra Mohan Mukhopadhyaya (of Calcutta)	110
Suryakanta Babu (Zamindar of Dacca)	203
T	
Tirthavasini (one of the five names given to Ma by her parents)	3
Tripurasundari (Bholanath's mother)	10
U	
Upendranath Bandopadhyaya (doctor of Mirzapur and disciple of Sri Aurobindo)	191
Urmila Devi (sister of Chittaranjan Das)	180

Name	Page number on which it first appears
Usha Didi (wife of Janaki Sen)	19
	V
Vasanti Devi (wife of Sri Chittaranjan Das)	180
Vibhu Thakurta (brother of Atul Datta's wife)	117
Vinay Babu	56
Virendra Babu (doctor)	186
Virendra Chandra Mukhopadhyaya (Didi's eldest brother)	125
Vrindavan Babu (lawyer)	132
	Y
Yadunath Bhattacharya (Ma's brother, called Makhan)	11
Yamini Kumar Chakravarti (Bholanath's younger brother)	10
Yatindranath Bandopadhyaya (father of Ashutosh)	142
Yogendra Babu (son of Raja Janakinath Rai)	154
Yogendra Rai	100
Yogesh Bandopadhyaya	87
Yogesh Chandra Ghosh (Rai Bahadur)	15
Yogesh Chandra Rai (later became Jogesh Brahmachari and finally Swami Niranjanananda)	122

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